Beginning of

Reinhold Niebuhr's conception of the relationship between Christian ethics and natural law

This title was preceded by

A general survey of the history of Shechem to 586 B.C

And is continued by

An archaeological study on some Greek cities in Galilee

Search by title on archive.org to continue reading this collection of Pacific School of Religion Theses from 1940
call number Thesis Cage 1940 v.4

REINHOLD NIEBUHR'S CONCEPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND NATURAL LAW

NAOMICHI KODAIRA

Nippon Theological Seminary, Japan, 1937

THESIS

Submitted in the Department of
Philosophy of Religion in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Pacific School of Religion

1940

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Graduate Theological Union

https://archive.org/details/reinholdniebuhrs00unse

C O N T E N T S.

I. INTRODUCTION:
   A. Two Orders: The Natural Order and the Orders of God.
   B. Reinhold Niebuhr.

II. THE NATURAL MAN.
   A. The Sinful and Evil Nature.
      1. Will-to-live
      2. Self-love
      3. Pride and Injustice
   B. The Divine Nature.

III. THE CHRISTIAN ETHICS.
   A. The Basis of Christian Ethics.
      1. The Myth of Creation and Fall.
      2. The Myth of Incarnation.
   B. The Ethics of Jesus.
      1. Love as an Impossibility.
      2. Love as a Possibility.
      3. Love as an Impossible Possibility.

IV. THE NATURAL LAWS.
   A. The Historical Survey of the Natural Law.
      1. Stoicism
      2. Augustine
      3. Aquinas
      4. Luther
      5. Melancthon
      6. Grotius
      7. Comparison on the Natural Law.
         a. Cathotic Church
         b. Protestant Church
   B. The Relative Natural Law.
   C. The Absolute Natural Law.
      1. Freedom
      2. Equality
      3. The Law of Love

V. CONCLUSION:
   A. Possibility of Christian Ethic.
   B. The Basis of Christian Ethic.

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

A. Two Orders: The Natural Order and the Orders of God.

B. Reinhold Niebuhr.

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. THE TWO ORDERS; THE NATURAL ORDER AND THE ORDER OF GOD.

From the beginning of history, Christianity has conformed to society and individuals of every age. This adaptability of Christianity to the social situation is one of the characteristic phenomena. Christianity on the one hand is pure religion, which is based on several myths[1], which are not related to the ethical problem. For example, the myth of Creation and Fall - such a mythical description cannot be accepted as a solution of the ethical problem by many persons. The myth is conceived as some kind of an order of God. But, on the other hand, apart from the Christian idea, which is established on the order of God, there exists the natural order, in [illegible] history and life. All phenomena are controlled by this natural order. Therefore, every person cannot help but recognize the existence of the natural order as the controlling principle of the world. All social institutions and the State are conceived as the result of natural order. So there is a cleavage between the natural man emphasizing the natural order, and the Christians insisting on the order of God. Many great theologians - Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Calvin, had attempted to harmonize these two orders and have pointed out many helpful points. In

---

[1] R.Niebuhr, REA p.122-123 "A philosophy of history adequate to bring all of the various perspectives, from those of economists and political strategists to the insights of artists and moralists, into a total unity must be endowed with the highest imagination. It must combine the exact date of the scientist with the vision of the artist and must add religious depth to philosophical generalizations. An adequate philosophy of history must, in short, be a mythology rather than a philosophy. It is precisely because modern culture is too empirically rationalistic that it cannot do justice to the very history of which it is a contemporary spectator. It lacks a vision of the whole which would give meaning to the specific events it seeks to comprehend. A vision of the whole is possible only if it is assumed that human history has meaning; and modern empiricism is afraid of that assumption. Meaning can be attributed to history only by a mythology."

recent years, Brunner, Maritain, Gilson, Ehrenström and R. Niebuhr seem to be the outstanding thinkers on this problem.

B. REINHOLD NIEBUHR.

In the present age, Reinhold Niebuhr is considered one of the most influential thinkers among the American theologians. Many theological students are familiar with his name and quote sentences from his books and discuss his ideas; but, sometimes, as Professor J. C. Bennett indicates, he is misunderstood by many students and "it is quite common to dismiss him with a shrug of the shoulder as an unpleasant pessimist and an inconvenient critic of assumptions which have become too much a part of us to question. I have known people who have dismissed him without reading carefully one of his books."[2]

According to Professor J. C. Bennett, he is considered a person, who "has mediated to American insights which have become commonplaces of European Christianity. He might be described as the soul of Europe hovering over American thought. Fortunately, he represents those insights in so moderate a form that it is possible for Americans to understand them without actually going through the experiences which have molded the minds of European Christians."[3] According to "American Philosophies of Religion" he belongs to the neo-supernaturalism and he is recognized as one of the followers of Paul Tillich.[4]

Then I admire his deep thinking and his ample background. He completely depicts the theological, the social and the political problems,

---

[2] J.C.Bennett, "The Contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr", p.268
[3] J.C.Bennett, CRN RIL p.268
[4] Wieman & Meland, APR p.94

which represent many different facets. And, "he does not offer a compromise between them. He does not give us a synthesis of them. He does not do what most of us do - take one of them and correct it in the light of the others. He leaves the opposite standing, after severe criticism, and his constructive thought is made up of the tension between these opposites. This way of thinking means in practice, that if you read only one chapter or article of Niebuhr's, he seems very one-sided and extreme; but if you read his work as a whole you find that no thinker could be more balanced."[5]

I think this indication of Professor J. C. Bennett depicts his method clearly. With this characteristic mode, he clarifies the problem of evil and sin. The problem of sin and evil are the basic matter in all society and individuals. I think in this case he uses two great backgrounds - Marxism and the Orthodox Christianity- in depicting the problem of evil and sin. But his standpoint is neither Marxism nor Orthodox Christianity. This method is his characteristic attitude. He conceals his own idea behind Marxism and the Orthodox Christianity and uses them in criticizing another aspect. Therefore, his standpoint is misunderstood several times and very difficult to comprehend.

He indicates not only the pessimistic side of individuals and society, but also the optimistic side. "In the same way Jesus finds glimpses of God, of pure spirit; of perfect love, in human nature, in the love of parents for their children for instance and in the innocency of little children; yet he also knows that out of the heart of this same human nature 'proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false

---

[5]J.C.Bennett, CRN RIL p.270

witness, blasphemies.' His confidence in the goodness of human nature is not as simple as that of liberal Christianity. The Kingdom of God, in his view, will be established not by the goodness of loving men but by the Grace of God. Yet there are glimpses of the eternal and the absolute in human nature."[6]

Therefore, he points out the natural man in a corrupted situation, but he reserves some room for recovering, like Brunner's idea on the image of God. And on the other hand, he emphasizes ... salvation by Christ - by the Grace of God. In a word, he harbors some kind of thought emphasizing the Orthodox Christianity and criticizes all aspects of social and individual problems. Though he is not a so-called theologian, he is recognized as a great Christian thinker, especially when it concerns the ethical problems.

---

[6] Niebuhr, REA p.282
cf. MMIS p.256

CHAPTER II - THE NATURAL MAN.

A. The Sinful and Evil Nature.

1. Will-to-live.

2. Self-love.

3. Pride and Injustice.

B. The Divine Nature.

II. THE NATURAL MAN.

A. THE SINFUL AND EVIL NATURE.

Men will never know themselves fully, so far as we can judge now. We are conscious that we are men, but we do not recognize what it means. Many simple-minded individuals live and die without realizing its significance.

To know what man is, is one of the hardest things in this world. Many sagacious and perspicacious men have wanted to solve this great question, but they have not as yet arrived at sufficient understanding. While they live, they suffer from this eternal enigma, and die merely as people who lived the animal life, still fostering this question.

In order to avoid such agonies in solving the obscure enigma, the mediocre men are given impulses and instincts. They are born with impulses and pass away without knowing the afflictions which torture the sagacious men. For them, impulses are the means of unconscious adjustment of life which obliterate human agonies. God furnishes reason for the sagacious men, and impulse for the mediocre men. But, as a matter of fact, it is very difficult to distinguish the difference between them. Some people live their first stage of lives like the wise men; but, at the end, they lose their aim of solving the eternal question and become mediocre men. Moreover, we find an entirely opposite illustration to this case. At any rate, many living men are drawn into the vortex of chaos entangling and producing many difficult problems. Therefore, I might say, coalescence is the characteristic word in expressing what man is. Man is a mixture of all ideas

and characters, continually changing. Among these characters, impulse and reason are the two great poles standing in Niebuhr's mind.

1. WILL-TO- LIVE .

Man has many impulses, but the will-to-live is the most fundamental impulse. There is no man, who does not wish to live and to exist. "Life" is the basic assumption in the human problems. All individual and social problems start from this assumption, and end with this assumption.

Such will-to-live accompanies necessarily, the will-to-power. For the sake of life, man needs the power of protecting himself and increasing his possessions.

Therefore, in the world demanding the will-to-power, there occur many conflicts and contests. The naive persons, in that case, wish to get a more powerful force in order to find the solution of strifes. On account of this intention, the struggle for existence is getting more severe and complicated. On the contrary,some intelligent beings desire to decrease the will-to-power to naught. They think that by diminishing the will-to-power, a peaceful and ideal state will be brought into the world. But, in history, human beings have never experienced such tranquility, and there remains only the remainders and residues of struggles and conflicts.

2. SELF-LOVE.

The consciousness of self-love comes from the will-to-live.

> "The very basis of self-love is the natural will to survive. In man the animal impulse to maintain life becomes an immediate temptation to assert the self against the neighbour."[1]

---

[1] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.51

For the sake of life, men must protect, at the first stage, themselves, because they love themselves. According to the natural impulse of the will-to-live, men act as self-centered men. There are no exceptions, all men are captives of self-love. That men love their lives, is the eternal truth.

Then, they need [illegible] power in order to protect their lives and increase their possessions, which they love. "The will-to-live becomes the will-to-power."

> "Every social group tends to develop imperial ambitions which are aggravated but not caused solely, by the lusts of its leaders and privileged groups. Every group, as every individual, has expansive desires which are rooted in the instinct of survival and soon extend beyond it. The will-to-live becomes the will-to-power."[2]

This transmutation is executed with reason, because the will-to-power is an action from consciousness, while the will-to-live is an instinct based on unconsciousness.

> "Reason may be the very force which transmutes this will-to-live into a will-to-power. The transmutation is practically inevitable because life in any particular form is darkly conscious of the fact that it is arbitrary and capricious and that competing forms of life are challenging its right to existence."[3]

As a result of this connection of the will-to-live with reason, there appears "the imperialism of the individual", which is "the root of all imperialism."[4]

All men have this imperialism of individuals, which is based on self-love and self-centered idea, and which acts with the aid of reason.

Niebuhr indicates this kind of imperialism in the illustration of trader as "unconscious imperialist."

---

[2] R.Niebuhr, MMIS p.18
[3] R.Niebuhr, REA p.6
[4] R.Niebuhr, DCNR p.133

> "The trader is not a conscious imperialist; but he needs raw products for his machines, markets for his goods and investment opportunities for his surplus capital. Each modern industrial nation was therefore forced into imperialism: and its imperialism came in conflict with that of other nations, driven by the same necessities."[5]

When the will-to-live is connected with reason, there appears the imperialism of individuals, and of societies. As a result of this imperialism, there exists conflict and strife. . But if the will-to-power is not associated with reason, what will come out instead of imperialism?

According to Niebuhr, "natural impulse, without the discipline of reason, may lead to anarchy in the self and in society."[6]

That is to say, when the will-to-live concerns reason, there is imperialism of individual and society. But when the will-to-live does not contact with reason, there appears anarchy in the self and in society. We cannot arrive at eternal tranquility by imperialism nor by anarchy.

As a consequence of the transmutation of the will-to-live to the will-to-power, we will find capitalism, which is the social power, based on the consciousness of imperialism.[7]

But capitalism does not bring us eternal tranquility, for which mankind waits. After the coming of capitalism, there still remains conflict and strife, because a few capitalists can enjoy a large amount of wealth, but a mass of proletariat cannot appreciate such wealth.

> "Private ownership means social power; and the unequal distribution of social power leads automatically to inequality and injustice. By vesting the power of ownership in the hands of comparatively few individuals the present social system insures the faulty distribution of the wealth which modern machines create."[8]

---

[5] R.Niebuhr, REA p.14
[6] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.104
[7] cf.R.Niebuhr, REA p.26
[8] R.Niebuhr, REA, p.24

3. PRIDE AND INJUSTICE.

On the other hand, the result of transmutation of the will-to-live to the will-to-power causes the appearance of imperialism, anarchy and capitalism. But, on the other hand, it will be conceived as the occurrence of pride and injustice.

> "All power leads to pride and injustice; to the pride of 'them that despise me', the pride of men who have forgotten that they are creatures and that no creaturely human strength is strong enough to make nature purely the servant of man rather than his nemesis; to the injustice of those who create their security at the expense of the security and freedom of others."[9]

Pride does not come only from the material, but also from the spiritual possession.

A man who obtains possessions, is proud only of his ownership. That is to say, pride is a result of "imperialism of individuals."

Such a thought is clearly based on egoism. "Pride is the form of egoism" of man.[10] "Egotism is always destructive."[11]

For the sake of protecting the self, man needs to take a form of expansion. The expansion with power necessarily accompanies destruction. But destruction by egotism indicates sin. In other words "egoism is the driving force of sin."[12]

As a result of such egoism, the pride of self means disobedience to God. In the presence of God, man has the pride that man is not a creature and mortal. Therefore, pride is the trust not in the ultimate character of God, but in some achievement of the human spirit.[13]

"Injustice is as inevitably a consequence of power as pride."[14]

The problem of man is that of justice seeking equality. But, when

---

[9] R.Niebuhr, BT p.100
[10] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.44
[11] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.71
[12] Ibid p.97
[13] R.Niebuhr, BT p.114
[14] Ibid. p.102

this justice is broken by one, it results in a conflict. Therefore, injustice led by power is the expression of sin.

That is to say, when a man wants to live with power, there appears pride and injustice, which are the basis of evil and sin.

Pride means, in the vertical relationship of God and man, sin; and injustice points out, in the horizontal relationship between man and man, evils. But the ground of injustice is pride. "Augustine saw the tragic aspect of human history very clearly. With the prophets he regarded human pride as the root of human injustice: and both pride and injustice as violation of the will of God."[15]

Therefore, Niebuhr does not agree with the attitude of Social Gospel, which sees injustice as the sole cause of sin. For him, the source of sin is not injustice, but pride.

> "This pride has at least one aspect of what Christian Orthodoxy means by the original sin."[16]

According to Niebuhr, "the original sin is not an inherited corruption, but it is an inevitable fact of human existence, the inevitability of which is given by the nature of man's spirituality. It is true in every moment of existence, but it has no history."[17]

> "It (the original sin) is not so much an inherited corruption as an inevitable taint upon his spirituality of a finite creature, always enslaved to time and place, never completely enslaved and always under the illusion that the measure of his emancipation is greater than it really is."[18]

Accordingly, he does not follow the idea of the Protestant Orthodoxy. He does not regard "the Fall" as the historical event. He denies the representation of "perfection before the Fall" as a perfection existing in a his-

---

[15] R.Niebuhr, BT p.120
[16] Ibid p.30
[17] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.90
[18] cf R.Niebuhr, BT p.30

torical epoch before the Fall. Instead of this concept, he indicates "the perfection before the Fall" as an ideal possibility before the act; in other words, a dimension of human existence rather than a period of history. Moreover, according to the Fall as the inevitable fact, he does not depict the inherited corruption. There remains some room in order to connect it with eternity, in the human being. That is to say, he hypothesizes the existence of the Natural Law in this section.

Sin in him does not mean just "finiteness" of man.

> "The Christian approach to the problem of sin is, however, not exhausted in the recognition of mere finiteness. That recognition is in some sense involved in all moral and philosophical theory. All modern moral theory may be briefly described as complacent finiteness..... The more classical culture religions, such as Neo-Platonism and Buddhism, are characterized by a tragic sense of finitude in which sin and evil are indentified with temporality."[19]

Moreover, he denotes neither "incompleteness" nor "wrongness" as sin indicated by psychologists.

> "It is, therefore, not egocentricity which is sin, as is frequently assumed by modern theologians. Egocentricity is a natural limitation of nature. Sin is expressed not in making the self the centre of the self, as in animal existence, but in the more spiritual enterprise of making the self the centre of the world. Sin is not a quality of nature but of the spirit. It is the pretension of finite nature, unwilling to accept its finiteness. It is the ambition of man, seeking to make himself God and being involved in rebellion against God, and being involved in rebellion against God as a consequence. It is the recurring tendency in all human culture and morality to make the partial, imperfect, contingent, and particular the criterion of value. (Romans 1:18-32)."[20]

What are concrete illustrations of such pretensions? that is, man's desire to be the creator and immortal? Man is conceived as a creature, which comes from nothingness and created by God.

On this point, we notice that God is the creator and man is his crea-

---

[19] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.77-78
cf CFCL p.73

[20] R.Niebuhr, CFCL p.76

ture. God is God, man is man. There is no mediate existence between God and man.

Moreover, "Man is mortal. That is his fate."[21]

But man is different from animals, because he knows that he is "the only mortal animal who knows that he is mortal."[22]

But man is not satisfied remaining a creature. He attempts to make "the Tower of Babel" from Man to God. This is the first pretension - the pretension of the Creator. Next, man pretends not to be mortal. That is the second pretension.[23]

Therefore, sin, to Niebuhr, is not finiteness, incompleteness, wrongness nor egocentricity, but pretension.

Man's pretension of God - that is to say, sin exists not only in the human nature, but also in the relation of the human nature and the spiritual existence. According to Niebuhr's favorite words, "sin lies at the juncture of spirit and nature."[24]

Therefore, sin is understood completely, when it is disclosed in the presence of God. According to Niebuhr, "sin can really be known only when life is analyzed from the perspective of the law of love."[25]

Evil shows the larger scale, because it is conceived as a "lack of the prudence required for the tentative agreement between self-interest and the larger interests."[26]

Evil is the object of larger interest, which may be based on reason. Evil means the socio-moral aspect of sin, while sin is used for religio-moral aspect of sin.[27]

---

[21] R.Niebuhr, BT p.28
[22] R.Ibid p.67
[23] cf.R.Niebuhr, BT p.28
[24] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.87
[25] R.Niebuhr, CFCL pp.72-73
[26] Ibid p.72-73
[27] cf.R.Niebuhr, CFCL p.76-77

That is to say, I think evil indicates the horizontal relation of man to man, but sin discloses the vertical relationship of man to God.

In the self and society, we can find many illustrations of sin and evil. But they are especially conspicuous in the conflict between national communities,[28] and in international situations.[29]

Consequently, the Natural Man, who is born with the will-to-live, is under the influence of Sin and Evil. From the outset of history, man could not escape from these restrictions.

That man is sin and evil, is the destiny of man.

B. THE DIVINE NATURE.

But, on the contrary, "since man is a citizen of two worlds, he cannot afford to renounce his citizenship in either. He must work out his destiny both as a child of nature and as a servant of the absolute."[30]

Usually, in understanding Niebuhr's thought, man puts too much emphasis on the child of nature, who is infringed with sin and evil, but we must notice the human being as the servant of the absolute. Absolutely, "Man is a creature of time and place, whose perspectives and insights are invariably conditioned by his immediate circumstances. But man is not merely the prisoner of time and place. He touches the fringes of the eternal. He is not content to be merely an American man, or Chinese man, or bourgeois man, or man of the twentieth century. He wants to be man".[31]

That is to say, a man has two natures: the temporal and the absolute,

---

[28] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.136
[29] Ibid p.141
[30] R.Niebuhr, DCNR p.186
[31] R.Niebuhr, BT p.28-29

the changeful and the eternal. Religiously speaking, man is sinful, but is also holy.[32]

Therefore, several theologians believe in the general revelation, because the natural phenomenon including man's character implies fragments of holiness, which would have a relationship with holiness of God.[33]

> "In Stoicism, life beyond the narrow bonds of class, community, and race is to be affirmed because all life reveals a unifying, divine principle. Since the divine principle is reason, the logic of Stoicism tends to include only the intelligent in the divine community."[34]

Therefore, in the beginning of history, Stoicism already indicated the human holiness with the expression of divine reason.

The scholars of Stoicism thought a man's reason as divine and recognized this reason as the absolute natural law in opposition to the relative natural law. In the present age, the bourgeois society "believes that its social ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity are the ideals of the (absolute) natural law, eternal and immutable principles of nature which reason discovers and applies. These ideals of reason are believed to be just as universal, absolute and timelessly valid as any ideals of social order and moral good developed by medieval theology."[35]

All great thinkers and theologians have conceived the optimistic utopianism concerning the nature of the human being. For example, the utopianism of eighteenth century[36] and the Liberal Protestantism[37], the

---

[32] R. Niebuhr, MMIS p.53
[33] R. Niebuhr, BT p.15
[34] R. Niebuhr, ICE p.59
[35] R. Niebuhr, BT p.34
[36] Ibid. p.125 "Let us solve the problems of mankind by universal education. Education will eliminate religious prejudice and superstition and all the injutices which flow from it. Thus the prophets of the 18th century dreamed of an imminent Utopia in which reason would adjust all human conflicts and reasonableness arbitrate all contests of interest."

[37] Ibid. p.126 "Liberal Protestantism has a version of the humanistic trust which represents a nice combination of the Protestant and the rationalist variation. The man to be trusted is the man who is both pious and intelligent."

Liberal utopianism and the Marxian utopianism.[38]

They thought that "prudence alone may prompt nations to a measure of self-sacrificing action, since unqualified self-assertion must lead to mutural destruction."[39]

But, as a matter of fact, the divine reason and intelligence are very weak, they "cannot bear the burden alone when a disposition to humility and a capacity for mercy is lacking."[40]

Consequently, the human being has two sides: the sinful and the divine. But, in fact, the divine nature is broken with the sinful, as Paul indicated in his Epistles.

Such an understanding may be of importance in apprehending the problem of Christian Ethic and the Natural Law.

---

[38] Ibid. p.191-192 "The liberal utopians expect such a utopia when reason has overcome the impulses of nature; and the Marxian utopians expect it when a classless society has destroyed the conflict between classes. In each case the seriousness of human sin is not understood."

[39] R.Niebuhr, DCNR p.142

[40] Ibid. p.156

CHAPTER III - THE CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

A. The Basis of Christian Ethics.

1. The Myth of Creation and Fall.

2. The Myth of Incarnation.

B. The Ethics of Jesus.

1. Love as an Impossibility.

2. Love as a Possibility.

3. Love as an Impossible Possibility.

III. THE CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

A. THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

> "It is true to say that all 'natural ethics' may be summed up in this (certainly very indefinite) general formal definition: ethics is the doctrine or the science of conduct, which is distinguished from all that is accidental and not based on principle by ultimate principles which characterize it as 'right'. This definition of ethics would cover the theory of Epicurus as well as that of Kant. But even this conception - broadly conceived as it is - does not apply to the Christian ethic."[1]

This is because the Christian ethic is constructed upon Christianity, which demonstrates conspicuous characters in comparison with other religions. whatare the peculiar characteristics of Christianity? The most significant factor to be considered is that Christianity is based on the myth of the Creation, and the Fall and Incarnation.[2]

The mythical religion is, of course, based on "myths", which are depicted with the human imagination which "plays freely upon the rich variety of facts and events in life and history, and which "seeks to discover their relation to basic causes and ultimate meanings without a careful examination of their relationship to each other in the realm of natural causation."[3]

The myth is the imperfect and insufficient expression of man, who is conscious of Something powerful automatically in facts and events.

---

[1] E.Brunner, DI p.82
cf. R.Niebuhr ICE p.34

[2] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.33-34 The mystical religion is "the rational in its final effort to transcend the temporal, an effort which forces it to transcend even the rational." Therefore, "mysticism is really a self-devouring form from centre reality and ends by an ultimate reality beyond all rational forms."

[3] Ibid. p.36

So, Niebuhr mentions, "perhaps the simplest mythical thought is the animistic thought of the primitives in which each phenomenon of the natural world is related to a quasi-conscious or quasi-spiritual causal force with little or no understanding of the web of cause-effect relationships in the natural world itself."[4]

The Christian ethic has also the mythical elements in its ground. Especially, the Creation and the Fall, and the Incarnation are the two great important poles in the Christian myths. Through these myths, the Hebrews felt something quite different from the natural order - that is to say, the orders of God.

1. THE MYTH OF CREATION AND FALL.

From the myth of the Creation, which was created by the orders of God, we will find God as the Creator, not the result or the first cause of the natural orders.

> "The God of mythical religion is, significantly, the Creator and not the First Cause. If he were first cause, (a rational conception) he would be either one of the many observable causes in the stream of things, in which case God and the world are one; or he would be unmoved mover, in which case his relation to the world is not a vital or truly creative one. To say that God is the creator is to use an image which transcends the canons of rationality, but which expresses both his organic relation to the world and his distinction from the world. To believe that God created the world is to feel that the world is a realm of meaning and coherence without insisting that the world is totally good or that the totality of things must be identified with the Sacred. The myth of the creator God is basic to Hebraic religion."[5]

The conception that God is the Creator is the most outstanding idea of Christianity. All thoughts of Christianity is condensed into this one sentence - God is the Creator.

---

[5]R.Niebuhr, ICE p.36-37

Furthermore, "in the myth of the fall, the origin of sin is not made identical with the genesis of life. It is therefore not synonymous with creation, either in the sense that God ordained it or that it is the inevitable consequence of the incarnation of spirit in matter and nature. Hebrew spirituality was, consequently, never corrupted by either the optimism which conceived the world as possessing unqualified sanctity and goodness or the pessimism which relegated historic existence to a realm of meaningless cycles. The existence of evil was, on the one hand, a mystery, and was, on the other hand, attributed to human perversity. The myth of the Fall makes the latter explanation too unqualifiedly in the sense that it derives all the inadequacies of nature from man's disobedience, a rather too sweeping acceptance of human responsibility for nature's ruthlessness and for the brevity and mortality of natural life."[6]

The prophetic religion was the group inheriting the myth of the Creation and the Fall consistently. The prophets understood that, from the idea of the Creator, God was the Supreme Sovereign over human beings, and that God was omnipotent and omniscient. Moreover, they noticed that from the idea of Fall, they were men as Sinners in the presence of God.

> "A vital, prophetic Christianity is consequently forced not only to maintain its independence against naturalism and other-worldliness, but to preserve its purity against sacramental vitiations of its own basic prophetic mythology. The inclination of Christianity to deviate from prophetic religion in terms of sacramental complacency on the one hand and mystic other-worldliness on the other is partly derived from the Greek influence upon its thought and is partly the consequence of its own commendable sharpening of the religious tension in prophetic religion."[7]

> "The religion of Jesus is prophetic religion in which the moral ideal of love and vicarious suffering, elaborated by the second Isaiah, achieves such a purity that the possibility of its realiza-

---

[6]R.Niebuhr, ICE p.37-38
cf Noe. STEC p.51

[7]R.Niebuhr, ICE p.41

tion in history becomes remote. His Kingdom of God is always a possibility in history, because its heights of pure love are organically related to the experience of love in all human life, but it is also an impossibility in history and always beyond every historical achievement."[8]

Consequently, if we do not use the myth of the Creation and the Fall, the conception of sin in our understanding is very superficial as discussed in the previous chapter, "The Natural Man." Without the aid of the myth, sin might be conceived only asincompleteness or as a faultbut sin itself has more profound dimension than these superficial indications. Sin is pretension, and pride in the presence of God. Such definition mentioned in Chapter II, is certainly a result of understanding of these myths.

2. THE MYTH OF INCARNATION.

From the myths in Christ,we know the love which is impossible for us, but which is, however, possible as an imperfect or fragmental love in us. Love as "impossible possibility" was manifested in the figure of Christ. Therefore, though Niebuhr does not mention, incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, I suppose he harbors such ideas in the word of love as "impossible possibility."[9] This expression will be explained more in detail

---

[8]R.Niebuhr, ICE p.41-42
cf. Troe. STCC p.51

[9]E.Brunner uses the expression of Dogmatics which is chiefly established on Incarnation as the same idea to the mythical religion. He sets forth that Dogmatics equivalent to the mythical religion must be the basic principle of the Christian ethics.

E.Brunner, DI, p.84 "The great Christological passages occur in the midst of practical extortations, and moral instructions are always more closely connected with 'dogmatic' ideas..... Every theme of dogmatics is also inevitably a theme of ethics. Dogmatics does not exist independently, nor does ethics, but dogmatic knowledge as such always aims at existential, that is, ethical, thought, and ethical knowledge is rooted in knowledge of dogmatics."

That is to say, as Niebuhr demands the mythical religion as the ground of the Christian Ethics, so Brunner requires Dogmatics on the fundamental principle of the Christian Ethics. Both great scholars indicate the same common concept in the different expression. But Niebuhr emphasizes the myth of Fall with the myth of Creation more than the myth of Incarnation. But Brunner, on the contrary, places more emphasis on the myth of Incarnation with the myth of Creation than the myth of the Fall.

in the next chapter.

At any rate, the mythical religion is constructed with two important components; Creation and Fall, and Incarnation, but these two cannot be separated from each other. It is because the first description is the most basic conception which indicates God as the Creator, and man as the sinner. The second idea presupposes the first idea and sets forth the ideal love of Christ, which is looked upon as an impossible possibility.

Consequently, as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the most characteristic idea of the Christian ethics is that it must be founded on the mythical religion. It is because the Natural ethics, which is called the doctrine or the science of conduct, does not question the existence of the human being as the sinful and evil condition. The Natural Ethics connects only the result of the human existence with his conduct, but the Christian Ethics questions further the human being itself with its mythical components. In the other expression, the Natural Ethics deals only with human conduct, but the Christian ethics, with the human conduct and existence, because it can scrutinize closely the human beings with the mythical religion.

The Christian Ethic, which takes the mythical religion as the fundamental principle, visualizes the human sinfulness more strictly than the natural ethics, in which the conception of sin is only incomplete. Furthermore, the natural ethic shows the human sinfulness and outness, but the Christian ethics declares the love in Christ which rescues and saves sinful man from the deep purgatory. The myth of Christ is more characteristic than the myth of the Creation and the Fall. Naturally, the basis of the Christian Ethics must be the mythical religion - the myth of the Creation and the Fall, and of the Christ.

In the second chapter, I scrutinize the Natural man who is controlled under the influence of the natural order from the myth of the Creation and

the Fall, and mention the evil and sinful situation. But in the next part, I would like to mention the myth of Christ - God as the Redeemer in contrast to God as the Creator.

B. THE ETHICS OF JESUS.

The ethics of Jesus naturally presupposes the ethic of the mythical religion, especially the myth of Incarnation and it is recognized as the ethic of the love-centered ethic. According to Niebuhr, this characteristic love is considered as "impossible possibility" in his book "The Interpretation of the Christian Ethics."

For the sake of convenience, I divide this impossible possibility of love in two parts: love as an impossibility and love as a possibility. As I have already indicated, the ethic of Jesus is also established on the mythical religion, which includes the myths of Creation and Fall, and Incarnation. So this love must be founded also on the two mythical elements. I dare say, as a result of this connection, the love of Jesus became love as an impossibility, emphasizing the myth of Creation and the Fall, and the love as a possibility, insisting on the myth of Incarnation, and finally such a love must be considered eschatologically aslove, the impossible possibility.

1. LOVE AS AN IMPOSSIBILITY.

I mentioned love as an impossibility comes from the mythical religion, especially from the myth of Creation and Fall. But,the myth of Creation means, as pointed out in the section of mythical religion, that God is the Creator - God as the Supreme, which signifies the vertical relationship of God to Man. Furthermore, the myth of the Fall signifies Men as sinners.

So, the mythical religion "deals with vertical aspects of reality which transcend the horizontal relationships which science analyses, charts, and records."[10] The vertical relationship, which is inherited from the mythical religion, is one of the characteristics in the ethic of Jesus. With this vertical relation, we are conscious that God is the Creator, and we are creatures and sinners.

Therefore, the ethic of Jesus elucidates our sinful situation from the vertical connection. The ethic of Jesus is not the ethic of sinners, which means the horizontal relationship, but the ethic which denotes the vertical relationship of God to sinners. In the ethic of sinners, there is not the absolute equality and freedom, but in the pretense of God, there is impartiality among us.

According to Westermarck, this vertical relation of the ethics of Jesus is considered as the retributive emotion.[11] So the ethic of Jesus scrutinizes the self-love or the self-assertion which is apt to be sinful.

> "The absolutism and perfectionism of Jesus' love ethic sets itself uncompromisingly not only against the natural self-regarding impulses, but against the necessary prudent defences of the self, required because of the egoism of others."[12]

Every form of self-assertion is scrutinized and condemned in words which allow no misinterpretation. The very basis of self-love is the natural will-to-survive because an immediate temptation to assert the self against the neighbor is equivalent to the animal impulse to maintain life. Therefore, in the ethic of Jesus, concern for physical existence like animal

---

[10] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.36

[11] E.Westmarck, CM p.40ff. "The thesis that moral judgments are based on retributive emotions may seem to have been a strange introduction to discussion of the ethics of the New Testament with their doctrine of love and forgiveness. But I maintain that this thesis is nowhere confined more than these synoptic gospels."

[12] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.49

life is prohibited. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? . . . Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." (Matt. vi. 25-32)

Then, self-love demands the love of possession, the living being is forced to possess something. "To possess" pleases him, so he wants to possess for self-rejoicing. But Jesus refutes this idea, because, when love of possession exists, there is hardly any room left for love of God. "The most natural expansion of the self is the expansion through possessions. Therefore the love of possessions as a form of self-assertion meets the same uncompromising rigour - Love of possession is a distraction which makes love and obedience to God impossible."[13]

Then, Jesus rejects pride, which comes from self-love. Pride is sinful, because it means that the human being establishes "the Tower of Babel" to God. Man is a creature and mortal. But the man who feels pride in his arrogant heart, does not accept God's order. This bias is naturally sinful and must be refuted. "The most penetrating analysis of the character of self-love are to be found in Jesus' excoriation of pride, particularly the prideof good people. Pride is a subtle form of self-love."[14]

---

[13]R.Niebuhr ICE p.52

[14]Ibid. p.53

On the whole, Jesus rejects the physical existence of the Natural Man, insisting pride against the will of God. Pride is the basic ground of sinful intention in the human being. It is because Man has pride, that he wishes to pretend in imitating the Creator.[15]

Man's pretension is rejected in the ethic of Jesus, because, pretension means opposition to the mythical religion in which God is Creator, and insistence of man's power against God Supreme. Therefore, pretension is sin and is refuted by Christ.

In short, the love of Christ inherits the vertical relationship of God to Man, and declares the impossibility of love by the Natural Man, who does not repent and forgive and who does not contact Christ. The love as an impossibility, therefore, means impossibility of Christ's love by the sinners, who cannot repent. But, Niebuhr saves room for a possibility of the love of true and ideal Christians, who are contrite and forgive.

2. LOVE AS A POSSIBILITY.

This is, so to speak, the central part of the ethic of Jesus. In the first section, we notice the love as an impossibility by the Natural Man, because of the cleavage between God and Man. But this cleavage must be broken completely with the love as a possibility.[16] This love is manifested through the myth of incarnation of Christ.

So the ideal love of Christianity is, on the one hand, impossible to the humanistic idea, but on the other hand, it shows a possibility by Jesus Christ.

---

15 Chapter II "The Natural Man."

16 R.Niebuhr, ICE p.219 "The cleavage can only be mythically expressed as one between obedience and sin, between good-will and evil-will. This cleavage is ultimately overcome by love."

On the whole, Jesus rejects the physical existence of the Natural Man, insisting pride against the will of God. Pride is the basic ground of sinful intention in the human being. It is because Man has pride, that he wishes to pretend in imitating the Creator.[15]

Man's pretension is rejected in the ethic of Jesus, because, pretension means opposition to the mythical religion in which God is Creator, and insistence of man's power against God Supreme. Therefore, pretension is sin and is refuted by Christ.

In short, the love of Christ inherits the vertical relationship of God to Man, and declares the impossibility of love by the Natural Man, who does not repent and forgive and who does not contact Christ. The love as an impossibility, therefore, means impossibility of Christ's love by the sinners, who cannot repent. But, Niebuhr saves room for a possibility of the love of true and ideal Christians, who are contrite and forgive.

2. LOVE AS A POSSIBILITY.

This is, so to speak, the central part of the ethic of Jesus. In the first section, we notice the love as an impossibility by the Natural Man, because of the cleavage between God and Man. But this cleavage must be broken completely with the love as a possibility.[16] This love is manifested through the myth of incarnation of Christ.

So the ideal love of Christianity is, on the one hand, impossible to the humanistic idea, but on the other hand, it shows a possibility by Jesus Christ.

---

15 Chapter II "The Natural Man."

16 R.Niebuhr, ICE p.219 "The cleavage can only be mythically expressed as one between obedience and sin, between good-will and evil-will. This cleavage is ultimately overcome by love."

"The ideal of love is thus first of all a commandment which appeals to the will. What is the human will? It is neither the total personality nor yet the rational element in personality. It is the total organized personality moving against the recalcitrant elements in the self. The will implies a cleavage in the self but not a cleavage primarily between reason and impulse. The will is a rational organization of impulse. Consequently, the Christian ideal of a loving will does not exclude the impulses and emotions in nature through which the self is organically related to other life. Jesus therefore relates the love of God to the natural love of parents for their children: 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' In its appreciation of every natural emotion of sympathy and pity, of consanguinity and human solidarity, the ethic of Jesus is distinguished from the ethics of rationalism."[17]

It is because the "deeds of love are not the consequence of specific acts of the will. They arethe consequence of a religio-moral tension in life which is possible only if the individual consciously lives in the total dimension of life. The real motives of love, according to the Christian gospel, are gratitude and contrition. Gratitude and contrition are the fruits of a prophetic faith which knows life in its heights and in its depths."[18]

"To understand life in its total dimension means contrition because every moral achievement stands under the criticism of a more essential goodness. If fully analyzed the moral achievement is not only convicted of imperfection, but of sin. It is not only wanting in perfect goodness, but there is something of the perversity of evil in it. Such contrition does not destroy selfishness in the human heart. But there is a difference between the man who understands something of the mystery of evil in his own soul and one who complacently accepts human egoism as a force which must be skilfully balanced with altruism in order that moral unity may be achieved.

"To understand life in its total dimension means to accept it with grateful reverence as good. It is good in its ultimate essence even when it seems evil and chaotic in its contingent and momentary reality. Faith in its essenceis not an arbitrary faith. Once held, actual historic existence verifies it; for there are in life as we know it in history and nature innumerable symbols of its ultimate and essential nature. Grateful reverence toward the goodnessof life is a motive force of love in more than one sense. Gratitude for what life is in its essence creates a propulsive power to affirm in existence what is truly essential, the harmony of life with life."[19]

---

[17] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.220-221
[18] Ibid. p.228a
[19] Ibid, p.228-229b

If Christ does not exist, the man who feels only this contrition and gratitude which comes from the impossibility of God's love is eternally fallen into the depth of destiny or of purgatory. But Jesus forgave the person who contrites and imitates him. In another expression - Jesus forgave the man, who had faith for contrition.

This forgiveness in Jesus is chiefly indicated in purely religious and not in socio-moral terms, and is the subject of his ethic.[20] In the case of forgiveness in Jesus, it does not signify a relationship among the human beings, but a relationship between God and man. Still it is fixed on the vertical axis. "We are to forgive because God forgives. We are to love our enemies, because God is impartial in his love. The points of reference are vertical and not horizontal. Neither natural impulses nor social consequences are taken into consideration."[21]

But without this vertical perfectionism, the horizontal universalism absolutely will not exist. If we should admit such an eccentric situation the universalism of Jesus loses the most important phase and degenerates into universalism of Stoicism.

---

[20]J.C.Bennett, CRN, p.279 "Niebuhr's final insight is that the heart of religion is the experience of grace and forgiveness. He deals with this subject in the brief concluding chapters of his last two books. Those discussions are tantalizingly brief. Though they come at the end of each book they are more than perorations, as they are organically related to his whole thought. He deals with grace and forgiveness in fresh terms far removed from the forensic categories of most traditional theology. He thinks of grace as that which gives men fulfillment and peace within the state of tension which is required by the conditions of their lives. 'Essentially', he says, 'the experience of grace in religion is the apprehension of theabsolute from the perspective of the relative. The unachieved is in some sense felt to be achieved or realized. The sinner is justified even though his sin is not overcome.' Or again he says in words which suggest Hocking's description of religion as 'anticipated attainment;' 'In every life there must at least be times and seasons when the good is felt as a present possession and not as a far off goal.'"

[21]Niebuhr, ICE p.56

"In Stoicism, life beyond the narrow bonds of class, community and race is to be affirmed because all life reveals a unifying, divine principle. Since the divine principle is reason, the logic of Stoicism tends to include only the intelligent in the divine community.... In the thought of Jesus men are to be loved not because they are equally divine, but because God loves them equally and they are to be forgiven, because all are equally far from God and in need of his grace."[22]

That is to say, the ethic of Jesus is firmly based on the vertical relationship of God and man and it presupposes the perfectionism of Love. "This perfectionism makes his thought seem more deeply pessimistic than it really is. There is hankering after what he calls 'pure spirit', whatever that may be. There is straining after the 'absolute' and 'the unconditioned.' He says at one point: 'Every life deserves destruction' - a saying which yields no meaning to me. He says that it is our moral obligation to affirm all life - rather than the life of the ego.' It is a curious trace of sentimentality to affirm all life - which Niebuhr takes over from Schweitzer - and it is perhaps as a result of this that every life deserves destruction for even the most innocent child eats meat. Also it is stretching things to say 'rather than' the life of the ego instead of 'including' the life of the ego. These may seem small points but they do suggest a habit of thought which leaves me completely baffled. It seems to threaten our ethical sense of proportion and when it is linked with the idea that all below the perfect is sin it lays the ground for a morbid attitude toward that human conduct which is the best possible in a situation."[23] Beside this idea, the ethic of Jesus indicates the horizontal relationship of men, which is called the universalism of postulate. "The love absolutism in the ethic of Jesus expresses itself in terms of a universalism, set against all narrower forms of human

---

[22]R.Niebuhr, ICE p.59

[23]J.C.Bennett, CRN p.280-281

sympathy, s well as in terms of a perfectionism which maintains a critical vigour against the most inevitable and subtle forms of self-assertion. The universalistic element appears in the injunctions which require that the life of the neighbour be affirmed beyond the bounds set by natural human sympathy. Love within the bounds of consanguinity and intimate community is regarded as devoid of special merit: 'For if ye love them which love you, what thanks have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?' An all-embracing love is enjoined because God's love is like that. In Professor Torrey's recent translation of the four gospels, Matt. v 48 is rendered in words which fit in perfectly with the general logic of Jesus' thought: 'Be therefore all-including in your good-will,as your Heavenly Father includes all."[24]

3. LOVE AS IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITY.

The ethic of Jesus, which includes the perfectionism and the universalism, must be thought as the eschatological component. According to Niebuhr, Jesus points out this idea in the illustrations of rewards. "Possibly Jesus thought of all these rewards only in eschatological terms."[25]

All these promises of ultimate rewards - alms, good works and good deeds, will not be compensated in the present existence of man. These promises are considered as the eschatological connotation. But, Niebuhr refutes the eschatological character in the ethic of Jesus denoted as "interim" ethics.[26]

> "If by an eschatological ethic is meant an 'interims' ethics, an ethic to be followed in the short period before the coming of the Kingdom of God, an ethic which regards the affair of this world with indifference and contempt because the end of the world is imminent, the ethic of Jesus is definitely not in this category. The note of apocalyptic urgency is significantly lacking in many of the passages

---

[24] R.Niebuhr, ICE p.59
[25] Ibid. p.64
[26] Ibid. p.66

in which the religio-ethical rigour is most uncompromising. The motive advanced for fulfilling the absolute demands is simply that of obedience to God or emulation of his nature, and there is no suggestion that the world should be held in contempt because it will soon pass away."[27]

But, in Niebuhr, the ethic of Jesus is not the "interims" ethic, but the apacalyptic ethic. "The Apocalypse is a mythical expression of the impossible possibility under which all human life stands."[28]

That the ethics of Jesus have the eschatological meaning as the apocalypse, is equivalent to that his love-centered ethic must be considered as impossible possibility.

Jesus Himself wished, on the one hand, the realization of his ethic in his lifetime, but, on the other hand, the ethics required by Jesus were impossible in realization, as Paul indicates clearly. "He expected the coming of the Messianic Kingdom in his lifetime; at least that seems to have been his expectation before the crisis in his ministry."[29]

In other words, the coming of the Messianic Kingdom means the coming of the true and ideal Christian group, who will apprehend the love of Christ completely. But, in fact, the love as a possibility is not established by the true and ideal Christian, because there are no ideal believers who deserve love as a possibility. Even if he is a Christian, he is influenced under the character of the Natural Man. There is no Christian who does not experience self-love, self-assertion, pride and pretension, evil and sin. So he is, on the one hand, a son of God, but on the other hand, a ' son of wrath'. He could appreciate the love of Christ as a son of God, but in reality, as a son of wrath, he could not execute it because of his

---

[27]R.Niebuhr, ICE p.66
[28]Ibid. p.68
[29]Ibid. p.68

sinfulness as a Natural man, which is the destiny of man.

As a son of God, man can understand Christ's love, but as a son of wrath or as a Natural man, man cannot comprehend the ideal love. Christian, in ideal,must be a son of God, but in reality, he is a son of wrath. He is a mixture of a son of God, who has a possibility of realizing the love of Christ, and of a son of wrath, who has no possibility of arriving at the ideal love. Therefore, for him, the love of Christ seems to be "impossible possibility." There remains a room of a possibility in understanding the love, but no room for realization and action.

As a result of this love - impossible possibility, Niebuhr criticizes the Christian attitude towards war in his article on the "Christian Moralism in America."[30]

Niebuhr asserts the impossibility of love against the modern pacifist, who insists on a democracy identified with the Kingdom of God in political life, because such a person does moralistic rationalization. Some Christian pacifists degenerate the absolute demand of the Kingdom of God into relative realization with moralistic rationalization. Such an idea, which connects democracy with Christianity is sinful as well as tyranny is, because "neither does it make sense to inveigh against tyranny and to declare in the next breath that it is useless to resist tyranny because[31] you are no better than the tyrant anyway, and[32] you will turn into a tyrant and gangster if you dare to resist tyrants and gangsters."

That is to say, he declares the impossibility of realizing the ideal love against the modern pacifists like the naturalmen., because their asser-

---

[30]R.Niebuhr; "Christian Moralism in America" p.16. Winter, 1940,R.Religion published by the Fellowship of Socialist Christians.

[31]R.Niebuhr, CMIA p.18

[32]Ibid p.18

tion is based on self-righteousness; self-love, self-assertion and he mentions possibility to the believers who have felt despair and repented.

> "The Christian faith really begins in the cry of despair of St. Paul: 'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.... Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this dead?' In answer to this cry it declares that the divine mercy revealed in Christ is on the one hand a power which overcomes the contradiction between what we are and what we ought to be, and on the other hand a pledge of forgiveness for this sinful element which is never completely overcome short of the ultimate culmination of history. Only such a faith can disclose the actual facts of human existence."[33]

But, as a matter of fact such possible love cannot be realized by human sinfulness, because it becomes the "simple possibility of every true believer."[34]

As a result of this process, Niebuhr points out by going back to the Reformer's idea, that whatever the weakness of the Protestant Reformation may be, comparatively, Reformers stand on the myths of Christianity and act in understanding the myth of Christianity. In other words, reformers are the most audacious Christians executing the love as an impossible possibility, indicating in the myth of Christianity in the world history.

That is to say, Niebuhr is not simply a modern pacifist, but a Christian pacifist who realizes the myth of Christianity and wishes to promulgate the love as impossible possibility.

Therefore, the ethic of Jesus firstly inherits the mythical religion, especially the myth of Creation and the Fall. As a result of this assumption his ethics must indicate the vertical relationship of God to man - God the Creator and man the sinner. The person is led to the perfect existence of God, which is completely Perfect. But in the presence of the perfect, all

---

[33] Nieburh, CMIA p.19

[34] Ibid. p.19 "To understand American Christianity one must understand that the eighteenth century Enlightenment has been curiously compounded with the various strains of sectarian Protestantism, in all of which the doctrine of 'justification by faith' was virtually rejected in favor of a simpler doctrine which made the perfection of Christ the simple possibility of every true believer"

human beings are controlled under the restriction of "Impossibility", because the law of God is impossible within the range of human ability. That is to say, the perfectionism of love, the vertical relationship of God to man, the impossibility of love by Niebuhr all these ideas are founded on the myth of the Creation and Fall; and furthermore they are involved in the idea of the Law of God.

But on the contrary, the ethic of Jesus assumed the possibility of love to the believer who had repented and was forgiven by Christ. They are universally called the sons of God. This forgiveness is the most profound expression of our love. Therefore, I suppose, the possibility of love by the forgiveness of Jesus is clearly visualized in the myth of incarnation, though Niebuhr does not mention it.

Then, he points out an eschatological idea on the realization of such vertical and horizontal relationships. But the term "eschatological", does not mean "interims" period before the coming of the Kingdom of God.[35]

The word, "eschatological" denotes a close relationship with history. It shows a possibility of realization of the vertical and the horizontal concern in this world, under the assumption that human beings are not sinners however, in reality, men are stained with evil and sin, so, the realization is thought as an impossibility. Therefore, the vertical and the horizontal relationship, which sets forth, in corpo-reality, the love of Christianity is considered as "impossible possibility." In this sense, he uses the term, "eschatological."

---

[35]Niebuhr, ICE p.66

CHAPTER IV - THE NATURAL LAW

A. The Historical Survey of the Natural Law.

1. Stoicism
2. Augustine.
3. Aquinas.
4. Luther.
5. Melancthon.
6. Grotius.
7. Comparison on the Natural Law.
    a. Catholic Church
    b. Protestant Church

B. The Relative Natural Law.

C. The Absolute Natural Law.

1. Freedom
2. Equality.
3. The Law of Love.

IV. THE NATURAL LAW.

A. HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE NATURAL LAW.

In the natural ethics, the natural law is the basis of all structures, and penetrates through the fundamental ground of all ethical thought.

In Christianity, though the ethic of Jesus did not contact with the natural law, in Paul, Christianity showed a tendency of relationship with the natural law, because, Christianity was primarily religious, but also ethical. But the ethical foundation of Christianity seemed very weak, therefore, Christianity must have borrowed some kind of an idea to intensify the ethical problem, which espoused as the natural result of Christianity. Consequently, many theologians attempted to use the natural law, which was inherited from Stoicism. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Melancthon and Grotius were particularly famous. In this section, I want to trace their thoughts briefly and later describe Niebuhr's idea.

1. THE IDEA OF THE STOICISM ON THE NATURAL LAW.

> "The Stoics were the members of a philosophical school founded in Athens about 300 B.C., which in its development, became characteristic of the whole Hellenistic area and age. Rooted in the strong moral instincts of the Semites, it grew to embrace the scientific knowledge of the Greeks, and branched out in the logical and practical method of Roman law and education. Its range in time extends over the three centuries before the Christian era and the first three centuries of that era; that is, it synchronizes with the history of the Roman Empire. Since that time its forces have been absorbed in the development of Christianity."[1]

---

[1] Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics, Vol. XI p.860

Among many scholars, Zemon von Kiton (etwa 336-264), Chrysippos von Soloi, (um 281-208), L. Anngus Seneca (etwa 3-65 n.Chr) and Marcus Aurelius Antonius (121-180 n.Chr) were the famous representatives.[2]

Natural Law had existed from the beginning of history, and the world was controlled by the Natural Law. But no one noticed such an obvious existence except Aristotle and Plato. In the classical age of Greece, this law was conceived as the unwritten law as contrasted with the written law. This unwritten law, however, was at first simply equivalent to traditional usage and custom, and it was later that it came to be taken in the sense of necessity, especially in the field of astronomy and medicine.

But such thoughts on the Natural Lawwere exceedingly expanded by Stoicism. The Law was thought as written by the diety in the human heart. Besides this, the law of reason was considered as the basis of all social usages and customs. Therefore, "the doctrine of the Stoics was, primarily, a religious-metaphysical doctrine, which arose out of the religious process of transformation which took place in later antiquity, and here also we have to do with a general sociological structure which has arisen out of a center of religious thought."[3]

In the first place, I want to observe the anthropology of the Stoicism, which will give us some kind of an understanding about the Natural Law.

According to Stoicism, man is constructed with a body (σῶμα), and spirit (ψυχή) and the essense of spirit is reason (λόγος), which is the central part, controlling the functions of the body (σῶμα) and spirit (ψυχή).[4]

---

[2]cf O.Dittrich SM p.17

[3]Troeltsch STCC p.64ff

[4]cf O.Dittrich SM p.19 Leib und Seele sind nämlich für den Stoiker, nur dem nach verschieden. Sie sind eigentlich beide körper (σῶμα)

Reason, especially the true reason (λόγος) is conceived as God, regulating the body and spirit in general,[5] and it had not always existed within the human being.[6]

As the result of these two sides of the Natural Law, the Stoics divided the Natural Law into two parts; the absolute and the relative natural laws. The absolute natural law, which is the same as true reason (ὀρθος λόγος) is the ideal and perfect law, which is divine.

It demands Goodness, which is the result of προαίνεσις -a right resolution.[7] The resolution comes from freedom in the inner heart of man. That is to say, the absolute Natural Law comes from the highest quality in the human being.

According to Dr. Künkel, in his lecture, this part is called creativeness - or adaptability, mobility .

But on the other hand, the relative Natural Law (ὁ λόγος) gradually connects with evil. Evil is the result of wrong resolution (προ[illegible]εσις) with the relative natural law.[8] Therefore, the ethics of Stoicism is only intellectual.[9]

Next, I want to observe the idea of the State.

In Stoicism, I think there lurks Zeno's individual and ethical ground. (individual ethisher Glundlage) as the basis of the idea of the State.[10]

That is to say, the individual is the important component of the State. The State is the magnified aspect of individual. But later, it

---

[5]cf. O.Dittrich SM p.34
cf. Ibid. p.48
[6]cf. Ibid. p.38
[7]cf. Ibid. p.25-26
[8]roeltsch STCC p.153, cf
cf Ibid. p.162
[9]cf. O.Dittrich SM p.20
[10]cf. Ibid. p.32

turned into the idea of universal equality and neighbourly love (Nächstenliebe).

The principle idea of the State comes from the universal equality of man in the presence of God (ὀρθὸς λ.) the true Reason.[11] The people are all sons of God, and brothers and sisters, and there is no difference between slaves and freemen, the Greeks and the Barbarians, man and woman.[12]

This idea of universal equality is connected with Nächstensliebe, which indicates duty in the social institution of men. But, as a matter of fact, the State does not point out such an ideal situation, but, on the contrary, the sinful and evil aspects. Therefore, there appears a paradoxical contradiction concerning the State. The State has, on the one side, the ideal based on the absolute Natural Law, and on the other, the sinful functions founded on the relative Natural Law.

It is the most difficult problem to interpret the relationship of these two ideas about the State. Cicero sets forth that submission to ordered government is a remedy against lawlessness and wickedness. Moreover, "Seneca developed this implication of this idea in detail, and he exalted this relation of the Law of Nature against sin as a matter of progress."[13]

2. THE IDEA OF AUGUSTINE ON THE NATURAL LAW

The early church, according to Troettich, lost the certainty of aim which was contained in the twofold idea of self-consecration for the love of God, and the brethren, and it was broken up into varied combinations of

---

[11] cf. O.Dittrich, SM p.34

[12] Ibid. p.34

[13] Troe. STCC p.154

particular scriptural commands, unscrupulous borrowings from the ethics of Stoicism and Cynicism, ascetic regulations and regulations of church order; it confused worship and ethical behavior, and connected with the idea of merit and the assurance of personal salvation.

The most characteristic phenomenon of this combination is the equation of the absolute Natural Law in Stoicism with the ideal love of Gospel. As I indicated already, the absolute law comes from the inner heart of human being, which is usually recognized as freedom. That is, the equation means the equation of freedom in the human being with the love of God.

The most conspicuous and corporeal illustration is indicated in the equation of the absolute Natural Law with the Decalogue.[14] This equation is very important, because it means equilibrium of the human freedom and the divine law, based on the Will of God. As a result of this equilibrium, the political and social problems, which come from the resolution of Natural Law, become connected with the Will of God, so that roughly speaking, the social institutions are also thought to be the Will of God.

The moral natural law as the dominion of the Divine Reason over the passion and desire in man, and the unification of mankind in the common possession of the Divine Reason- - that constitutes the heart and the positive content of the Christian ethics, which is innate in man, then formulated in the Decalogue, and which has finally been proclaimed afresh in the teaching of Christianity.[15]

St. Augustine had already read Cicero's "Hortensius" in his 19th year. Therefore, he was greatly influenced by Greek ideas. But later, to him,

---

[14] cf. Troel. STCC p.257
cf. Westermarck MC p.107-108

[15] cf. Troel. STCC p.143
cf. Westermarck MC p.107-108

Manichaenism seemed to solve the mysteries of the world; and his own experiences by which he was perplexed. He was absorbed in the Manichean thought, but he was not able to satisfy himself with such an idea. He was greatly disappointed and moved to the Neo-Platonism. He became acquainted with the Neo-Platonic philosophy. Its monism replaced the dualism; its intellectualized world of ideas, the materialism of Manichaeism. But, in his inner heart, he still was not satisfied with the metaphysical speculation. And while thus Augustine's metaphysical convinctions were being slowly remodelled, he met, in Ambrose, bishop of Milan, a man in whom complete worldly culture and the nobility of a ripe Christian personality were wonderfully united. Finally, it has been said that his conversion took place in the late summer of 386.

Consequently, we find that in his thought or theology, there existed a wide field of metaphysical ground. He had this assumption, so that he could appreciate on the one hand, the value of the Natural Law and on the other hand, the Christian theology.

But to the Church Fathers, the importance of the relative Natural Law was admitted alongside the absolute Natural Law of the Primitive State, for Augustine also inherited this idea in his thought. In him, the natural law was regarded no more than the customary modes of divine action - an order of action which might quite well be departed from exceptional circumstances, as though in the early Greek age. But he persued entirely the Stoic identification with Christianity. Thus the belief in the natural law is in no way conflicted with the belief of miracles.

> "At this point the doctrine of the church was so closely related with that of the Stoics that we may infer that there was some direct connection between the two."[16]

---

[16] Troel. STCC p.154

As a consequence of this equation, Augustine scrutinized the natural order - the State and Emperor, marriage and family.

The State is, in Augustine, established and supported by orders of God, so the people must obey the orders of government, as Seneca mentioned in the submission to government.[17]

He admitted the equation of the Natural Law with the Divine Law in the idea of the State. They are two great influential poles in the idea of the State.[18] Therefore, the corporeal existence of the State - the Roman Empire is, for him, the complex of two components.[19]

Then, he admitted the authority of Emperor as well as the State, though the authority of Emperor, of course, comes from the Natural Law. And on the other hand, he recognized that "the authority of Emperor comes from God - even under pagan rule - and still more that of the Christian Emperors."[20]

This idea might be interpreted as "the theocratic subordination of the Emperor to the priesthood, according to the pattern of the Old Testament and in so doing foreshadow the "Programme of the Middle Ages."[21]

Furthermore, Augustine points out marriage and family as supported by the order of God.[22]

---

[17] cf.O.Dittrich, SM p.229
[18] cf.Ibid. p.229
[19] cf.Ibid. p.229
[20] Troel.STCC p.156
[21] Ibid.p.212
[22] O.Dittrich, SM p.228 "Die Geschlechtsfunktionen sind im Sündenstande erotisch verderbt, die Zeugungsfähigkeit an die erotische Erregung geburden. Trotzdem bleibt Ehe und Familie durch gott naturgesetzlich geboten. In der christlichen, darum sakramental unlöslichen Ehe gibt die Gnade Kraft zur Heiligung und Entsühnung der Erotik. Die Familie wirdso, was sie sein soll: Einrichtung und Mittel der Fortpflanzung, Spielraum der Tugenden des Gehorsams und der Fürsorge, Unform ehelicher und beglückender Nächstenliebe und Persönlichkeits gemeinschaft. Sie ist ein hohes ethisches Gut mag auch die Jungfräulichkeit noch höhler stehen und das kommende geschlechtslose Himmelreich keine Fortpflanzen kennen.

In the early church, the Christians certainly increased the sense of duty of labour. "If a man will not work neither shall he eat" was strictly enforced. "The monks also were made to work; it remains to be proven how far the same could be said of capitalists and large-property owners. Here also the true ideal of labour was realized only in monasticism. On this point, an expression of Augustine is characteristic. He demands work from the monks who come from the peasant and labouring classes, with the argument: if even a senator or a landowner who is unused to work must work in the cloister, how much more is it the duty of peasants and labourers who are accustomed to work."[23]

3. THE IDEA OF THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE NATURAL LAW.

As far as the Natural Law was concerned, Thomas Aquinas was one of the representative scholars in the Catholic Church.

> "The principles of this (the Thomist) ethic lie, like those of knowledge, in the metaphysical sphere; that is, of course, obvious in connection with such a purely religious habit of mind; it was recognized as such in exactly the same way by Stoicism and Platonism. The Aristotlian doctrine also, which was now assimilated by a mediaeval thought, in spite of its empiricism took its share in those statements of idealistic and religious speculation, and especially added to the metaphysical ethic of reason the reference that in all the laws of reason we have to do with the gradual realization of the dominating aim of reasoning in particular spheres of Reality. Thus, according to the argument of all competent judges, the principle of ethics lies first of all in the eternal, Divine, world-wide, and natural Law of Reason, which governs the whole cosmos."[24]

The Natural Law of Reason is situated in the most pure part of the heart, as the similitudo Dei. The similitudo seems more pure and divine than the absolute natural law. Or it is rather religious, while the absolute Natural Law is philosophical.[25]

---

[23] Troe. STCC p.119
[24] Ibid. p.259
[25] cf Ibid. p.265

Therefore, this similitude, even though destroyed in the Fall, was kept by the human beings, and was conceived as the basis of Christian ethic.

But after the Fall, man lost the effect of the mystical miracle of grace, and of the Natural Law, "but he still retained a considerable amount of this practical reason."

But "when by sin man fell from this Primitive State, he still retained a considerable amount of this practical reason, or the knowledge of Natural Law in its main principles. This knowledge, however became more and more difficult. Thus a new Divine revelation of the Natural Law became all the more desirable the more that men learned to feel their need of it, and were thus prepared to receive it."[26]

Consequently by admittance of the Natural Law, St. Thomas united this Natural Law with the Christian Law, as the Early Church did.[27]

Especially, the equation of the Natural Law and of the Decalogue is the most crucial point in understanding the Thomist Ethics, as in Augustine.

> "The Decalogue, in reality, is not yet the Christian ethic; and the Natural Law, which is regarded as identical with the Decalogue, stands

---

[26]Troe. STCC p.265 "The similitudo Dei is added to the mere imago Dei, which God did not need to grant to human nature as such, but which is the pure gift of God's grace and of 'supernature.' This similitudo, therefore, forms the main point of interest in the doctrine of the Primitive State; the absolute Natural Law which had controlled this doctrine in the Early Church as well as in Stoicism, now takes a secondary section. The unhappiness caused by the Fall, therefore, is not so much the loss of absolute Natural Law and of the forms of life which correspond to it, as loss of the mystical miracle of grace, after the loss of which the knowledge of the mere Natural Law which still exists is useless for the attainment of superhatural salvation..... Natural Law not becomes relative, but the difference that this makes, however painful, is still not the decisive fact; the decisive element is the loss of that miracle of grace."

[27]Ibid. p.257 St. Thomas did "the equation, that is, of the Natural Law of the Stoics with the Mosaic-Christian Law of Revelation, as well as with the aid of the distinction - also under the influence of the Stoics - between an absolute and a relative Law of Nature."

precisely as near to and as far from the specifically Christian ethic, the Nova Lex, as does the Decalogue. It is an introductory and preparatory stage, and if in it Natural Law is deduced from and supported by Scripture, it is none the less only indirectly Christianized. 'Biblical' now means 'revealed' but for all that it is not directly Christian; for the Bible, in the thought of St. Thomas, represents a universal historical process of development with its varying stages."[28]

According to Thomas, the city of life was regarded as the important factor in the Christian ethics. "The one vital need of city life - essentially an industrial association - is peace, with which is combined freedom, and the sharing of each individual citizen in the life of the city as a whole, with freedom to work without disturbance and a right to acquire property by personal effort and labour. All these characteristics suggest a certain parallelism between the city and the claims of the Christian ethic. The town represented a non-military, peaceful community of labour, needing the military element solely as a means of protection, and devoid as yet of capitalistic and city features. As such it was a picture of the Christian Society. This parallelism is exemplified by St. Thomas."[29]

As a result of this thought, the State is considered as society "all the time of small, self-supporting, economically unified groups; this the sense in which he interprets the Aristotelian autocracy; instead of regarding the State, politically and ethically, as an end in itself, he places the security of a means of support which is not disturbed by unavoidable contingencies, in which as far as possible, all needs are met by the economic unity itself, and in relation to the outer world all that is to be desired is a supplementary form of trade in which imports exceed exports."[30]

Therefore, the idea of the State is thought as based on the natural

---

[28]Ibid. p.263
[29]Ibid. p.255
[30]Ibid. p.317

Law and claims of Christian ethics as in the case of city-life. This is the fundamental idea, the result of the equation of the Natural Law and Christian ethics.

4. THE IDEA OF LUTHER ON THE NATURAL LAW.

Martin Luther's opinion represents the attitude of the Protestant Church towards the Natural Law. But this ethical problem was rather the secondary theorem in the reformer's scheme. "At first Luther's ethic had a tendency towards a radical Christianity, which was only concerned with 'spiritual' matters and was aloof from and indifferent to the world."[31] He did not need the existence of the State, nor the protection of the law for private property. But "it was only gradually that Luther learnt to balance this tendency with the idea of the Christian nature of society required by the ecclesiastical conception, which always seemed very natural to him, and with the natural institutions of the State."[32]

And finally, he accepted the need of the Natural Law and construed it afresh. "In his view the guiding principle of the Natural Law is that we should do to everyone as we would like them to do to us. In this respect, love is also the meaning of the Natural Law, and is thus conformed to Christian morality. This leads him to demand that Positive Law should adjust itself to Natural Law and to the Christian ideal, with which, in the last resort, it is identical."[33]

Then, Luther applied this viewpoint on the Natural Law, to the Decalogue. "It is characteristic of Luther that he found the objective revelation of the moral law which manifested this inward impulse not in the Sermon

---

[31] Troe. STCC p.494
[32] Ibid.p.494
[33] Ibid.p.533

on the Mount, but in the Decalogue, which, again, in his mind, was identified with the natural moral consciousness or the Natural Law, which has been simply confirmed and interpreted by Jesus and the Apostles. It was thus that the Decalogue developed its characteristic absolute meaning within Protestantism, as the complete expression of the Lex Naturae, and of the Protestant ethic with which it was identified."[34] Calvin and Melancthon chased Luther's idea, which identified the Natural Law with the Decalogue. But they extended this idea with a more wide observation.[35]

Calvin included all the Old Testament Laws and history as the Natural Law. And Melancthon pronounced the Natural Law in a more rationalized form than Luther. Melancthon's idea will be described later in the paper, because he represented the most rationalized side among the scholars of the Reformation Age.

Then Luther observed the social institutions with this Natural Law. "Luther's view is that these institutions have either been appointed by God directly, or by reason, indirectly - that therefore they are implied in the creative order of reason and the Divine Law; it is, therefore, the duty of a Christian to accept them just as he accepts sun and rain, storm and wind."[36]

Therefore, in Luther, the Natural Law was the divine activity expressed in reason, and God was emphasized as the sounder of these institutions and of the State.

---

[34] Troe. STCC p.504

[35] Ibid. p.612-613 "Calvin speaks just as they did about the identity of the Natural Law with the Decalogue, in which, not only the Decalogue, but the whole Old Testament Law and the history of Isral appear as illustrations of the Natural Law."

[36] Ibid. p.503
cf Niebuhr; ICE p.162 "It must be admitted that the Lutheran doctrine of the Schoepfungsordnung is not a valueless concept. It is a symbol of the religio-mythical understanding for the organic aspects of life which rationalistic morality frequently fails to appreciate."

Then Luther touched the problem of the family. Family was an institution of the Natural Law and recognized also as designated by God.[37] "The economic organization and labour were held to be due to the Divine Command at the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden."[38]

As a result of the emphasis on the Divine Commandment in the social institutions and the State, he alleged non-resistance against authority. "In his theory, therefore, the idea of a social contact naturally disappears; in it there is no room for the transference of power based on the explicit or implicit consent of those who are governed, nor for any 'right of resistance", a revolution which extends farther than frank criticism, nor for any equalitarian conception of social human relationships, nor for any communistic ideal..... Non-resistance is, therefore, not primarily a demand of the Gospel, but a requirement of Natural Law."[39]

But such an idea was not inherited even among the reformers. Calvin, who was the other great pillar of the reformation, developed Luther's idea and opened a new approach in understanding the social institution, because, he, of course, admitted criticism of the institutions but he did not insist on the non-resistance against them.[40]

Therefore, in Luther, the Law of Nature is no longer regarded as the radical expression of the idea of personality, equality, community, property,

---

[37] Troe. STCC p.534. "Thus he asserts that the family is an institution of Natural Law, but he also asserts that it was expressly instituted by God. Indirectly the State was instituted at the same time as the family; but its Divine origin was also often confirmed in the Old Testament."

[38] Ibid. p.534

[39] Ibid.p.530
cf Ibid.p.532

[40] Niebuhr, ICE p.171. "Calvin's criticism against the princes has another significance. It opened the sluice for a new type of religious thought in Protestantism in which the theory of the natural law was developed to justify not only criticism of rulers, but rebellion against them."

of a life without compulsion or law, but the inspiration of all natural and necessary activity with the Spirit of faith, since everything which is required by Nature can be combined with the Spirit of faith, with love to God and Man.

5. THE IDEA OF MELANCTHON ON THE NATURAL LAW.

Phillip Melancthon (1497-1560) was remarkably influenced by the famous humanist, Reuchlin's spirit, because, Melancthon's mother was the niece of Reuchlin. Reuchlin took an interest in him, and following a contemporary custom, named him Melancthon (the Greek form of Schwarzerd, which was his father's name). Afterwards, he met Martin Luther at the Wittenberg university, and felt the spell of Luther's personality and spiritual depth, and seems to have been prepared on his first arrival at Wittenberg to accept the new theology, which had existed mainly in subjective form in the person of Luther. To reduce it to an objective system, to exhibit it dialectically, the calmer mind of Melancthon was requisite, so that he was looked upon as "the Protestant doctor of Natural Law", because he laid greater emphasis upon the philosophical character of Natural Law.[41]

> "In his ethical works and juridical speeches Melancthon expounded the conceptions of Natural Law with which we are familiar, in the classic formulas of Cicero, with some additional material drawn from Aristotle, upon whose 'Politics' he also wrote a commentary. He explained the Natural Law according to Cicero in the light of the Decalogue, which he considers identical with it."[42]

So Melancthon was inclined to be more rationalistic than Luther, because he connects the Decalogue as the Natural Law with the Aristotlean doctrine of the dominion of law into State.[43]

In him, the State was based on "a '<u>Mandatum Dei</u>' which was already in existence in Paradise when the authority of the family was instituted;

---

[41] Troe. <u>STCC</u> p.535

[42] Ibid. 535

[43] cf Ibid. p.536 "Melancthon claims that the Decalogue is valid, not as the Jewish Law, but as the product of Natural Law, and therefore, that the reasonable Roman Law is also the law for Christians, and not, as the Sectarians say, the Mosaic Law."

at this point, therefore, he enters into entire agreement with the Lutheran authoritative Law of Nature with its emphasis on complusion and order." He traced more freely Luther's idea of the State.[44]

Furthermore, "Melancthon asserts the 'right of resistance' far more broadly than Luther; this he does, however, only by appealing to the positive Roman Law, in which the Emperor declares that he desires to exercise his power with the consent of his subjects, and by an appeal to the German Law of the Empire, in which the liberty of a privileged class is justified in resisting an Emperor who breaks his contract with his subjects. Finally, against the worst injustices he recognizes the right to resist also as de jure naturae, and Luther accepted this reluctantly enough, commending the problem to the jurists and to reason."[45]

In short, in Melancthon, the doctrine of Luther was more freely interpreted. Especially, Luther's doctrine was more rationalized and changed and had a tendency towards Synergism. But, after Melancthon, Grotius developed his idea in a freer manner.

6. THE IDEA OF GROTIUS ON THE NATURAL LAW.

As we observed already, the most imposing use of the nature of Law was made by the Stoics. Augustine, Luther, and many other theologians attempted to Christianize this nature of Law. But the term was revived by Grotius when he based the international law. His position, according to Scott-Craig, was closer to the Catholic theory than to the Calvinist or even to the Lutheran theories.[46]

"The Law of Nature is a dictate of right reason which points out that an act, according as it is or is not in conformity with

---

[44] Troe. p.536
[45] Ibid. p.536
[46] cf Scott-Craig CAWP p.113

rational nature, has in it a quality of moral baseness or moral necessity."[47]

"What relation then does the moral law have to God? In the light of the above principles we can say of an act that it is 'either forbidden or enjoined by the author of nature - God.' But though the traits in man that give rise to natural law have been implanted by God, that law 'would have a degree of validity even if we should concede that which cannot be conceded without the utmost wickedness, that there is no God, or that the affairs of men are of no concern to him.' Acts covered by the natural law are in themselves either obligatory or not permissible, and therefore, are enjoined or forbidden by God; they are to be contrasted with acts covered by the specifically divine law, which is decreed by the arbitrary will of God who makes things unlawful simply by forbidden then and lawful and and obligatory by his command. And just as the morality of the natural law is intrinsic and not conferred by God, so it cannot be altered by him. Measureless indeed in some undefined sense the power of God may be, but even God cannot make two and two add to more than four, and even God cannot make that which is evil according to the natural law be anything but evil. He may command murder or theft as the absolute lord of life and property; but that does not make such conduct right.

"Natural Law has here plainly nothing to do with certain modern meaning which we might easily attach to the word. It has nothing to do with the immutable laws of the physical universe, which have sometimes been considered to be analogous to the working of the moral law in man."[48]

But, in Grotius, it is important, and prevents confusion, to remember that the natural law, is truly a human law.

"From natural law based upon reason, Grotius passes to consider another great realm of law in human affairs, that which he rather misleadingly calls 'human law', since natural law is also human. This realm of law is derived from unbroken custom, which in its turn rests on common consent, an act not of the intelligence but of the will. 'Whatever cannot be deduced from certain principles by a sure process of reasoning, and yet is clearly observed everywhere, must have its origin in the free will of man.' Human law, in the terminology of Grotius, is volitional, not rational."[49]

Then He indicated the divine law. "Divine law, like human law as defined by Grotius, is volitional in character. .... This law rooted in

---

[47]Scott-Craig. CAWP p.117
cf. Grotius, DJB, p.38
[48]Scott-Craig, CAWP p.117-118
[49]Ibid.p.120-121

the arbitrary will of God has been thrice promulgated,at the creation, after the flood, and through Christ."[50]

As the result of these two laws, the human and the divine, the New and Old Testaments are conceived as follows;

> "The ethical law of the New Testament is therefore shelved because it is irrelevant to the problems of everyday and of the common man. But even the Old Testament is not accepted as identical with the law of nature and as universally binding. It contains not only a republication of the law of nature but much else besides, special non-rational commands of God for particular occasions which it would be rash and mistaken to seek to obey now."[51]

But in Grotius, there is no feeling of any contradiction between the natural law and the divine law.[52]

> "Plainly it is left for reason to decide whether a command of God in the Old Testament is in conformity with natural law or not, and it can do so only by reference to material outside the Biblical revelation. So that the final authority for the ethics of a Christian is his reason and free-will, and the content of the natural and human law."[53]

Then, I would like to trace the idea of the State of him. The State and "its origin is a human necessity, though one approved by God and not a divine ordinance. Its function is to be deduced from human reason and human experience. The State, for example, limits human freedom; it takes away from men in general the right of resisting injury on their own account; but therein they concur, for it is in the interest of all. The State even appears at times to take from men the right of exercising their private judgment as to what is the right course to pursue in civic or international affairs. The State even appears at times to take from men the right of exercising their

---

[50] Scott-Craig, CAWP p.123
cf. Grotius DJB p.45

[51] Scott-Craig, CAWP p.124

[52] Ibid. p.125. Quoted from Grotius DJB p.27 - "And yet it is never in conflict with the true law of nature .... provided we carefully distinguish between the law of God, which God sometimes executes through men, and the law of men in their relations with one another."

[53] Scott-Craig, CAWP p.125

private judgment as to what is the right course to pursue in civic or international affairs. The State is of course, not to be obeyed if it commands anything contrary to the law of nature or of God. But even if the individual may dissent from the action of the State, which is a very hypothetical case, since the State is the creation of the group to which he belongs, Grotius leaves but little room for any still small voices of God. The natural and human law are in effect above the divine law."[54]

Lastly he interprets international law. "Grotius is not unmindful of the attitude of a Machiavelli that there is no such thing as international justice or international law. But he seeks to demonstrate the falsity of Machiavellian doctrine. He believes in the reality of justice; but even apart from that he is convinced that the view of Machiavelli does not fit the facts. It is not true that even the absolutist States of modern Europe are self-contained and self-sufficing. Respect for international law is forced on men not by voice of conscious simply but by circumstances themselves, by the cannons of experience: There is no State so powerful that it may not sometime need the help of others outside itself, either for purposes of trade, or even to ward off the forces of many foreign nations united against it. In consequence, we see that even the most powerful peoples and sovereigns seek alliances, which are quite devoid of significance according to the point of view of those who confine law within the boundaries of States. Most true is the saying, that all things are uncertain the moment men depart from law."[55]

---

[54] Scott-Craig CAWP p.125-126

[55] Ibid. p.122
cf. Grotius DJB p.17

7. COMPARISON OF THE IDEA ON NATURAL LAW, BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE PROTESTANT CHURCH.

a. The Catholic Church.

In conclusion, I would like to depict the understanding of Natural Law, as compared between the Catholic and the Protestant Churches.

> "The lex naturae springs from the Lex aeterna, the Eternal Divine plan, which, because it is unchangeable, is called lex. The lex naturae is the lex aeterna at work within the created world. It is called the lex naturae, in so far as it is implanted by Creation within the creature, in the broader sense: in all created beings it is the unconscious power which is ever at work to produce order in their life; in the narrower sense, it applies to the human rational creature in so far as the will of God is inscribed in the rational nature of man."[56]

Furthermore, Stoicism divided the Law of Nature into two parts: the absolute and the relative natural law . The Early Church Fathers took the same stand as pointed out by Stoics, but gradually the distinction disappeared, "even in the teachings of Aquinas the relation between the two is no longer regarded as one of contrast or opposition, but as a difference of degree, and is held to be due not so much to sin as to incompleteness or imperfection."[57]

All Catholic moralists seem to refute the difference between these two laws, and to think of the relative Natural Law as the ambiguous one. It is not a law at all, it simply expresses the necessity.[58]

---

[56] Brunner, DI p.628

[57] Ibid. p.629. "Whereas in the teaching of the Early Fathers the contrast between the absolute and the relative law of nature is extremely clear and sharp, because in it they saw an expression of the whole contrast between the world as it has been created by God and the fallen world (the relative Law of Nature is that which is adapted to the world which has become sinful, the absolute Natural Law corresponds to the Primitive State.)

[58] Ibid. 629-630 "But where it is honesly admitted that there are two kinds of Natural Law, the absolute and the relative, there is no exact definition of the content of the second, referring to the 'transformation formula' which would permit the absolute Natural Law to be applied to existing sinful conditions.... were the contrast between the absolute and relative Law of Nature openly admitted and carried into practice, at once it would be seen that the relative law of nature is not a law at all, but only a regulative principle, from which no definite demands can be deduced, but all that it determines is this: that in the sinful world, so far as possible the absolute law of nature must be carried out."

Moreover, the idea of the absolute Natural Law is made perilous by Brunner: But even the idea of the absolute Law of Nature conceals secret tensions. On the one hand, its applicability depends upon the fact that its content is not only universally valid but that it can be universally perceived, and is to be affirmed by every rational being.

"History, however, shows that this is not the case at all. Quite 'reasonable' people (and nations and periods) have regarded as 'good' things which are totally different from each other, and do so still at the present day. This does not, of course, contradict the absolute law, but it does contradict the absolute Law of Nature, in so far as by 'nature' there is meant the possibility of disposing of knowledge. Here we see the original fiction of Aristotelian anthropology: the doctrine of a universal reason, the confusion of the idea of the a priori with an anthropologico-psychological interpretation of this idea. In theological language it means that the failure to recognize the fact that through sin even the "original' rational nature of man has been altered, and has been affected by the contradiction (Rom. i. 21), is suppressed."[59]

To sum up, this line of thought leads to the following results:

> "The definition of that which is required of us here and now is absolute (Christian) Law of Nature - determined also by Christian truth, by means of an adjustment (no longer conceived in terms of law) to the concrete historical conditions of the sinful world; in so doing, however, the fact is overlooked that this 'natural' knowledge is only present where reason has been illuminated by faith, and that this 'adjustment' cannot be conceived in terms of law, or of principle, and is therefore incapable of uniform definition."[60]

---

[59] Brunner, BI p. 630-631

[60] Ibid. p.632

b. The Protestant Church.

"Both Luther and Calvin teach a lax naturae, but both in such a way that the natural knowledge of the truly rational is very restricted and limited, that only the reason which is illuminated by faith can understand the absolute law of God; Calvin makes this limitation far more evident than Luther does, and indeed Luther uses this conception far more than Calvin.

"At the same time both Reformers agree in teaching that the absolute law cannot be carried out within the sinful reality, wherever the conditions of society are concerned; but here it seems as though Luther alone still uses the conception of the lex naturae at all. But he does not use it as a law or a principle; on the contrary, he is fully aware that from the point of view of actual history it is irrational in character."[61]

But concerning the idea of the State and family, there seems no difference:

"Finally, both the Reformers, in agreement with the Fathers, and in partial agreement with the Scholastic thinkers, teach that the existing forms of society, above all the State and the Family, are divine institutions, but that in their concrete historical form they are products of the natural rational process, thus that the actual laws of this structure have a share both in the sinfulness of the world and in the will of God; in saying this Luther lays more emphasis upon the sinful aspect than Calvin does. The Lex Naturae and the Law of Nature is here concerned in so far as - mainly by Luther - emphasis is laid upon the fact, that the knowledge of the immanent legalism within these concrete spheres is predominantly a matter of the reason, and is only indirectly connected with faith. Here, however, every vestige of a system which can be grasped by the mind, of a system of Natural Law disappears; the 'doctrine of the Law of Nature' of the Reformers should therefore in essentials be that which is outlined in this book. What God requires for the ordering of the conditions of society cannot be rationally deduced from the rational system, but it can be discovered on each particular occasion, in obedience to the revealed will of God, by means of the reason."[62]

I think, in this problem, Nils Ehrenström's "Christian Faith and the Modern State" give a very manifested contribution.

---

[61] Brunner, DI p.632

[62] Ibid. p.632

The Natural Law is, according to the Stoics and the Church Fathers, the law of reason. Reason is one of the most conspicuous characteristics in a man. Human beings have two aspects of character : reason and impulse. Man prefers reason to impulse. Man is proud of his higher position than the animals, because of his reason, not of his impulse. Therefore, he estimates his reason as the final and the highest character. In the extreme case, reason is regarded as God.

From Aristotle to the modern non-empiricists, reason makes the criterion of all morality and sustains the world in peace. According to Aristotle who gives the final and the first authoritative word on this subject, "reason establishes control over all the impulses, egoistic and altruistic, and justifies them both if excesses are avoided and the golden mean is observed."[63]

The modern empiricist[64] and the non-christian humanists[65] like Eucyclopaedist, followed Aristotle's idea. Let us solve the problems of mankind by universal education. Education will eliminate religious prejudice and superstition and all the injustices which flow from it. Thus

---

[63]Niebuhr MMIS p.260

[64]Niebuhr REE p.123. "The modern empiricist does not escape mythological interpretations of history in his effort to avoid them .... In this mythology human history is portrayed as the gradual triumph of mind over impulse ... The historical progress toward an ethical goal is portrayed as a gradual cumulation of individual triumphs of reason over nature until the whole of nature is subdued."

[65]Niebuhr, BT p.236 (cf.Niebuhr, ICE p.173-174) "A non-Christian humanism makes human reason God. Reason is the universal value which it sets above all particular values and makes the criterion of all morality. It is by human reason that all history is to be judged."

the prophets of the eighteenth century dreamed of an imminent Utopia in which reason would adjust all human conflicts and reasonableness arbitrate all contests of interest."[66]

But, such an estimation of reason is thought as "a plausible dream."[67] They evaluate reason instead of faith, for security in the world of conflicts, but they cannot succeed. There are many contests and wars increasing with severity.

As I mentioned already, Stoicism divides the Natural Law into two parts: the absolute and the relative natural laws. The Church Fathers followed this division. But the Reformers changed the idea of the absolute law as pointed out in the previous chapter.

B. THE RELATIVE NATURAL LAW.

This law works as an agent of justice. Man wishes to get an "universally valid concept of justice, which compels strifes and contests as a peaceful state, because justice is the highest object of the human individual and society. But, justice is based on reason. Where there is no reason, there is no justice. And, this reason is conceived as the relative natural law.[68]

Niebuhr points out two typical illustrations; Thomistic and Bourgeois definitions. Thomistic definitions are filled with specific details which are drawn from the given realistics of a feudal social order and may be regarded as "Rationalization of a feudal aristocracy's dominant position in

---

[66] Ibid. p.125
[67] Ibid. 125
[68] Brunner, DI p.629 The idea on the relative natural law in the later Catholic Church is very important, because in Brunner's book "Divine Imperative" the church does not sustain the existence of the relative natural law as seriously as the Stoics did.

society."[69]

Then, he indicates the most characteristic idea of the bourgeois idealists in the eighteenth century. "Bourgeois idealists of the eighteenth century invented new natural law theories and invested with bourgeois rather than feudal-aristocratic content. The natural law in the eighteenth century was supposed to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. It was more exactly a "law of nature" rather than a "law of reason". But its real significance lay in the specific content of this law which justified the bourgeois classes in their ideals, just as the older law justified the feudal aristocrats.

In short, it is not possible to state an "universally valid concept of justice" from any particular sociological locus in history. Nor is it possible to avoid either making the effort or making pretences of universality which human finiteness does not justify. This inevitable pretence is the revelation of "original sin" in history."[70]

That is to say, reason makes the criterion of all morality and social order and it "prevents and reduces social conflict by relating interest to interest and will to will in ever widening circles of social harmony."[71] But, as in the case of the bourgeois justice, such an ideal reason cannot be sustained for a long time. A man aiming at the ideal is also apt to degenerate into a servant of impulse and sin, which is founded on the human pride.

"Human reason is made the servant and slave of human pride. The infinite possibilities in God's hands are foolishly restrained to some little canon of human logic."[72] It is because reason is based on the impulse like

---

[69] Niebuhr, Christian Ethics and Natural Law. Theology p.87, Vol.XL. Feb.1940
[70] Ibid. p.88
[71] Niebuhr, REE p.5
[72] Niebuhr, BT p.222

libido in the Freudian psychology and on the original sin in the orthodox Christianity.[73] When reason is connected with impulse and original sin, ideal justice falls into chaos. Justice becomes "something less than justice" with reason,[74] as in natural man, the will-to-live becomes the will-to-power through the intermediator of reason. And as a result of this transmutation, there occur many individual and social conflicts in arriving at a perpetual increase of definite morality based on justice and unselfishness.[75]

For that purpose, "reason is not the sole basis of moral virtue in man."[76]

Man needs "something more than justice" in seeking the true justice in the world. Therefore, this relative natural law does not become the basic foundation of ethics. We must trace the other side - the absolute natural law as a rudimentary ground. As the orthodox church does not show a great interest about relative natural law, so Niebuhr does not mention any concern particularly. Furthermore, he does not distinguish the absolute and therelative natural laws, but I use this distinction because of convenient description of his idea, especially in comparison with the historical concern.

C. THE ABSOLUTE NATURAL LAW

Though reason as the relative natural law is conceived as an agent of injustice and coercion, reason as the abstract natural law points out an utterly different point of view. Orthodox Christianity borrowed this

---

[73] Niebuhr MMIS p.26
[74] Ibid. p.258
[75] Ibid. p.85-87
Niebuhr REE p.212
" DCNR pp 129,156,161
[76] Niebuhr, MMIS p.26

idea from ... Stoicism,[77] and interprets the absolute natural law as the ideal existence, when the first Adam had not corrupted. Niebuhr uses this idea, but elucidates it apart from the Orthodox Christianity. It is because the Protestant Orthodox Church regards the Fall as an historical event, and "perfection" before the Fall as a perfect existing in a historical epoch before the Fall. But, Niebuhr does not follow this explanation. In him, the perfection before the Fall is not an historical occurance, but "an ideal possibility before the act."[78] It is a "dimension of human existence rather than a period of history."

At any rate, this perfection before the Fall is regarded as the absolute natural law. Therefore, the absolute natural law is ideal and abstract. Every human being has this ideal law, which is entirely different from all other laws, even from the relative natural law. This ideal law demands freedom and equality.[79]

1. FREEDOM.

The absolute natural law includes freedom and equality. In this section I want to explain the freedom first. With this freedom man can select evil and goodness, sin and faith. Man chooses evil and sin, which mean pretention of the Creator. In general, most of the people, who use this freedom and select evil and sin, manifest themselves in the destiny of natural man. This phenomena is due to the confusion of the freedom and reason. Of course, freedom comes from reason, but freedom is not equivalent to reason, which is the relative natural law.

> "It is the very nature of Stoic philosophy that it is confused about the relation of nature and reason. This confusion is due

---

[77] Niebuhr ICE p.154
[78] Niebuhr, Christian Faith and Natural Law in Theology p.30
[79] Niebuhr, ICE p.155

to the fact that it does not fully understand that freedom of man. In all Greco-Roman rationalism, whether Platonic, Aristoletian or Stoic, it is assumed that men's freedom is secured by his rational transcendence over nature. Since reason and freedom are identified, it is assumed that the freedom which man has over nature is held in check and disciplined by his reason."[80]

Man can use the other side of freedom and take a way towards goodness and faith. Such a freedom is considered to have a close relationship with love. That is to say, Niebuhr indicates, "love is the only final structure of freedom."[81] This point is very important, because in general, the absolute natural law in the historical process did not indicate freedom towards love. Niebuhr develops the absolute natural law into the idea of love.

3. EQUALITY.

Then I wish to think of the other side of the absolute natural law - equality.

The absolute natural law demands equality as well as freedom. Equality is one of the necessary modes, which is a corporeal expression of the law. "Equality is, therefore, a law of justice but a transcendent one. It differs from love, which transcends all law, in the sense that it is a law, though transcendent one, but it is not an irrelevant ideal and it is not completely transcendent. It suggests actual possibilities of justice in every social situation."[82] So, "the ideal equality will be relativized ..... by the necessities of social cohesion and organic social life, which will give some men privileges and powers which other men lack; and finally by human sin, for it is inevitable that men should take advantage of privileges .... with which nature or necessity has endowed them and should enhance them beyond the

---

[80] Niebuhr, Christian Ethics and Natural Law In Theology. p.89
[81] Ibid. p.89,
[82] Niebuhr, CFCL p.86

limits of the one and the requirements of the other."[83]

In history, we may never realize equality, but we cannot accept inequalities and injustices. That is to say, every society claims its privileges as justice, but such a justice is always based on inequality. "The fact remains, nevertheless, that reason is not capable of defining any standard of justice which is universally valid or acceptable. Thus Thomistic definitions of justice are filled with specific details which are drawn from the given realistics of a feudal social order and may be regarded as 'rationalization' of a feudal aristocracy's dominant position in society."[84] Then he scrutinizes the bourgeois idealists. "Bourgeois idealists of the eighteenth century invented new natural law theories and invested with bourgeois rather than feudal-aristocratic content. The Natural Law in the eighteenth century was supported to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. It was more exactly a 'law of nature' rather than a 'law of reason.' But its real significance lay in its specific content, the content of this law justified the bourgeois classes in their ideals, just as the older law justified the feudal-aristocratic. In short, it is not possible to state an universally valid concept of justice from any particular and sociological locus in history. Nor is it possible to avoid either making the effort or making pretences of universality which human finiteness does not justify. This inevitable pretence is the revelation of 'original sin' in history."[85]

But, on the other hand the law of equality is only a temporary expedient of ethics. Therefore, Christian faith must set it under the principle of love which is the fulfillment of all laws. "Equality may be the approxi-

---

[83] Niebuhr ICE p.158
[84] Niebuhr, Christian Faith and Natural Law in "Theology" p.87
[85] Ibid. p.87-88

mation in the realm of law of the principle of love."[86] That is to say, equality is, on the one hand, the law of justice and on the other hand, it points out the approximation of the law of love. But, as a matter of fact, the law of justice, which is recognized universally, does not exist in individuals and society. Therefore, the true equality must be manifested in a fragment of the law of love, as the genuine freedom is concerned with love. If equality is not connected with the law of love, it becomes the form of legalism.[87]

Consequently, the absolute natural law is established on the basis of freedom and equality. But, freedom produces the law of love and equality is the approximation of the law of love. Therefore, the law of love is at the bottom of the absolute natural law.

3. The Law of Love.

Niebuhr indicates the ideal love with the expression of "the law of love,"[88] because the law of love is based on the absolute natural law, which

---

[86]Niebuhr, CFCL p.94 (cf Niebuhr, ICE p.159) "The principle of equal justice are thus approximations of the law of love in the kind of imperfect world which we know and not principles which belong to a world of transcendent perfection."
(cf Niebuhr, Christian Ethics and Natural Theology in "Theology", p.88) "In its conception, natural justice is good as far as it goes, but it must be completed by the supernatural virtue.of love."

[87]Niebuhr, CFCL p.87, "Equality without the highest principle of love as a principle of judgment becomes a form of legalism in which a relative equilibrim in society is mistaken for the perfect harmony of life with life."

[88]Niebuhr, CFCL p.70 "The law of love is really the law of life. It is a basic requirement of human existence which men transgress at their peril. Every transgression disturbs and imperils the social harmony of human existence. Yet the law of love is not a law. It is a norm but not an obligation. At least it is an obligation which can be enforced."

is considered as perfection before the Fall. Therefore, it demands sinlessness, so man can not at this law easily . "The law of love, presupposes a human personality which is not at war with itself, that is, a sinless soul."[89] But, even though the Fall was not interpreted historically, mankind has fallen into the original sin. It wishes to pretend to be the Creator and to destroy his destiny as a mortal. As a consequence of such insistence, conflicts and contests continue eternally. Under such sinful situation, there does not appear the ideal of love. Therefore, the ideal of love is formed with the shape of the law of love."[90]

As a result of the description in this chapter, the relative natural law as the cause of such deterioration does not disclose any connection with the Christian Ethics, which is established on the ethic of Jesus. The ethics in Christianity demand the vertical judgment, first, and then, the horizontal judgment, which is the result of the former. For that reason, the relative natural law as a basis of sin and evil must stand in the presence of the vertical judgment, and will vanish from the sight of God. There remains no relationship between the natural law and the Christian Ethics except judgment and punishment.

Therefore, for that relationship, we must find some other way. The Church Fathers took up the absolute natural law, which is quite different from the relative one, and denoted a relationship between the natural law and the Christian Ethics. Here, contrary to the former case, reason which is called in this case the absolute natural law is regarded as "a guarantee of man's growing morality,"[91] in restraining impulses of nature.

---

[89] Niebuhr, CFCL p.71
[90] Ibid. p.70
[91] Niebuhr, MMIS p.212
cf. MMIS p.85, p.87. DCNR p.129, p.156

As I have already depicted in this chapter, the absolute law demands freedom and equality, and in reality, becomes a degenerated situation. But, on the contrary, Niebuhr develops the absolute natural law to the law of love, and he mentions that the absolute natural law originates the law of love as the incorrupted perfection in the human existence. The law of love is the existence of the essence of love, which is absolutely perfect and ideal. The human being, happily, has this uncorrupted quality in him. He has a hope in seeking a connection with God by the existence of the law of love.

But, in fact, the law of love which is regarded as perfection before the Fall, and as the basis of freedom and equality, which are the fundamental principles of the absolute natural law, does not exist. It is impossible, because, as a matter of fact, the human beings select evil and sin with freedom, and demand the corrupted equality as if it is the universal justice. But, on the other hand, there remains some kind of a possibility in appreciating such an ideal love. Therefore, the law of love as the ultimate result of the absolute natural law, becomes the impossible possibility and shows the same phenomenon to the love in the ethics of Jesus, which is impossible possibility. What relationship can we find between the law of love in the absolute natural law and the love of Jesus?

The law of love has freedom and equality, indicating the impossible possibility which are considered the quiescence of the absolute natural law. How to this freedom and equality connected with the love of Christ?

First, I dare say, if the love of Jesus relates to freedom, the result becomes faith, and religion. There is no ethic.[92]

---

[92] Niebuhr, ICE p.160 "The ideal of love, on the other hand, transcends all law. It knows nothing of the recalcitrance of nature in historical existence. It is the fulfilment of the law. It is impossible to construct a social ethic out of the ideal of love in its pure form, because the ideal presupposes the resolution of the conflicts of life with life, which it is the concern of law to mitigate and restrain. For this reason Christianity really had no social ethic until it appropriated the Stoic ethic."

It is because, freedom, in purest form, means the best decision in selecting something good. And this decision is usually called faith. Therefore, freedom becomes faith, by which man becomes contrite and forgives.

Next, the mythical religion must show the ethical side, because "the purifying process in Hebraic religion through which it arrived at a pure monotheism was dominated by an ethico-religion passion rather than a rational urge for consistency."[93]

Then, the ideal of love must be fastened together with equality in the law of love, and there appears the Christian ethics. "As the ideal of love must relate itself to the problems of a world in which its perfect realization is not possible, the most logical modification and application of the ideal in a world in which life is in conflict with life is the principle of equality which strives for an equlibrium in the conflict."[94]

Consequently, when the ideal of love in the mythical religions, particularly in Jesus is connected with freedom in the law of love, which is the inner part of the absolute natural law, the result is faith. And when the ideal of love in Jesus is related with equality of the absolute natural law, it becomes ethics. Therefore, the Christian ethics must be restricted with faith. In other word, Christian ethics must be established on 'justification by faith' indicating the vertical relationship of God to Man. And the ethics must show equality of man in the presence of God.

As a result of these conversion, the ethic of Jesus emphasizes, refines and clarifies the insufficient freedom and equality of the law of Jesus; the law of love will degenerate into the relative natural law.

---

[94]Niebuhr, ICE p.39

[95]Ibid. p.160

CHAPTER V - CONCLUSION.

A. Possibility of Christian Ethic.

B. The Basis of Christian Ethic.

V CONCLUSION.

In short, in this title "R. Niebuhr's conception of the relationship between the Christian ethics and the Natural Law", first, we must realize the possibility of Christian Ethics and second, the basis of Christian ethics.

A. POSSIBILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

Usually it is said that Christianity did not have its own ethics until the appearance of Stoicism. It is in its pure form entirely religious. But, in the Epistles of Paul, and other epistles like the Epistle of James, Christianity was forced to be ethical.

By their influence, Christianity was connected with the Stoicism, which insisted on Natural Law as the basic principle of ethics. But, in fact, this relationship is very ambiguous. Many theologians have attempted to connect and clarify the relationship of religion to ethics, so that they divid the Natural Law into two parts: the absolute and the relative and discussed chiefly on the absolute natural law into the law of love. And scrutinizes the absolute natural law into freedom and equality. And both ideas in their purest forms are found to be controlled by the law of love.

When freedom in its genuine form is concerned with the law of love, it becomes Faith. Then when equality relates to the law of love, it shows the highest and purest justice, which is the possibility of ethics. But, in fact, human beings do not always have such a perfect justice, they are apt to lose this ideal. Therefore, man needs something powerful in sustaining the ideal state. For that purpose, man takes up faith which is the supporter of the ideal in the law of love.

B. THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

Faith is the developed form of the freedom and decision of the law of love as already mentioned in the section of "the law of love".

It means the vertical relationship of God to Man, and looks up to the perfect and ideal shape of love in Christ. But the connection of faith,(which is one phase of the law of love), with the love of Christ is not simple, because the love of Christ is established on myths. For this difficult relationship, Niebuhr indicates the dialectical mode - love as an impossible possibility. So the vertical relationship is understood in the expression of the dialectical mode. Myths must be realized in the form of the dialectical relationship because it manifests the relationship between the eternal and the temporal.[1] This discription is the most characteristic idea in Niebuhr, and the basis of the Christian Ethics. Without this vertical relationship, the law of love becomes merely the Natural Law - especially in Relative Natural Law.

Furthermore, Niebuhr's understanding of myths is important, because myths include the idea of Perfectionism, and universalism. The myth of Creation and the Fall means the Perfect and the ideal Supremacy of God. Therefore, in the presence of such myths, man is forced to feel his sinfulness

---

[1]Niebuhr, BT p.4. "The relation between the temporal and the eternal is dialectical. The eternal is revealed and expressed in the temporal but not exhausted in it. God is not the sum total of finite occasions and relationships. He is their ground and they are the creation of his will. But, on the other hand, the finite world is not merely a corrupt emanation from the ideal and eternal. Consequently the relation of time and eternity cannot be expressed is simple rational terms. It can be expressed only in symbolic terms. A rational or logical expression of the relationship invariably leads either to a pantheism in which God and the world are identified, and the temporal in its totality is equated with the eternal; or in which they are separated so that a false supernaturalism emerges, a dualism between an eternal and spiritual world without content and a temporal world without meaning or significance."

and punishment. Or the contrary, in the myth of incarnation, God shows his Grace and forgiveness to the sinful man. Man easily understands God's love in the myth of incarnation, because he is conscious of the perfectionism of love in the myth of incarnation.

Moreover, such myths have universalism towards all beings. That Niebuhr takes these myths as the background of his thought, is the most different point from other liberal theologians. Myth is the core of his theology and thinking.

This is the reason why he is called a super-naturalist in the book, "American Philosophy of Religion."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aubrey, E.E., *Present Theological Tendencies* New York & London, 1936.

Bennett, J.C., *Christianity and Our World*, especially the Second Chapter: "The Christian Ethic and the Moral Confusion". New York: 1936

_____, *The Contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr*, Religion in Life, Spring Number, 1937, p.264.

_____. "The Problem of Evil," from *The Journal of Religion*. Vol. XVIII, No. 4. Oct. 1938

_____. *Social Salvation*. New York: 1935.

Brunner, E., *The Divine Imperative*. Translated by Olive Wyon. New York: The MacMillan Co., 1937.

_____. *Man in Revolt*. Translated by Olive Wyon. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

_____. *The Philosophy of Religion*. Translated by A.J.D. Farrer and B.L.Woolf. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937

Ehrenström, N., *Christian Faith and the Modern State*. Translated by Denzil Patrick and Olive Wyon. New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937.

Gilson, E., *Christianity and Philosophy*. Translated by R. McDonald. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939.

_____. *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. Translated by A.H.C. Downes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938.

Jerome, Davis., *The Christian Cult of Violence*, (with comments by R. Niebuhr) Religion in Life, Vol. VIII, No.1., 1934. p.432.

Lewis, Edwin., *Beyond Tragedy* (Featured Review) Religion in Life, 1939. p.137.

Mackintosh, H.R., *Types of Modern Theology*. London, 1939.

Maritain, J., *True Humanism*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.

Niebuhr,R., BT Beyond Tragedy, New York , 1937.

_____, CFCL Christian Faith and the Common Life An Oxford Conference Book. New York, 1938.

_____. Christian Faith and Natural Law , Theology (Monthly Review) Edited by Alec R. Vidler at St. Deinilo's Library, Hawarden, Chester, and published by the S.P.C.K., Northumberland Avenue, London, W.C.2, Vol.XL.No.236, February, 1940.

_____. DCNR Does Christianity Need Religion? New York, 1927.

_____. The Contribution of Paul Tillich, Religion In Life, Vol.VI, No,4. 1937. p.574.

_____. CRSW The Contribution of Religion to Social Work New York, 1932.

_____. ICE An Interpretation of Christian Ethics New York & London, 1935.

_____. LNTC Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic New York, 1929.

_____. MMIS Moral Man and Immoral Society New York and London, 1932.

_____. REE Reflections of the End of Era New York and London, 1935.

_____. The Return to Primitive Religion, Christendom, Vol.IV, No.I, Winter,1938, p.i.

Scott-Craig, T.S.K., Christian Attitude Towards War and Peace New York, 1938.

Troeltsch, E., STCC The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches New York , 1931.

Westermarck, E., Christianity and Morals. New York, 1939.

Wieman, H.N.,& Meland, B. E., American Philosophies of Religion Chicago, Willett, Clark, and Co., 1936.

End of

Reinhold Niebuhr's conception of the relationship between Christian ethics and natural law

This title was preceded by

A general survey of the history of Shechem to 586 B.C

And is continued by

An archaeological study on some Greek cities in Galilee

Search by title on archive.org to continue reading this collection of Pacific School of Religion Theses from 1940
call number Thesis Cage 1940 v.4